

Interview with Herb Edwards

Wobbly, at his home 2619 45th St

Seattle, Washington on October 1, 1972

from 2-4 pm by Tom Copeland

Tom : Could you tell me, I forget, where in Finland were you born?

Herb : Norway.

Tom : Norway, I mean Norway yeah. Where?

Herb : Oh, north of Trondheim, right on the coast line there between Nampos, the town that was obliterated by the Nazis when they moved into Norway that day. And incidently that was the only town when Hitler made a name. That was just a small town you know, just a few thousand in population in a beautiful setting. But Hitler used that town as an example to show that would happen to the Allies when he got through with them you see. Because the French and the English came in there unprepared you see and of course the Luftwaffe you know chased them out of there and they had to take out there and so on. But anyway it's between that Nampos and Trondheim on the coast line there is where I was born.

Tom : What did your father do?

Herb : Fisherman, yeah fisherman. I got a picture of him and the place. I could show you the place where I was born which wouldn't mean anything really but Helen has seen it. We take a trip over there. I was thirty-nine years away from there before I visited it the first time. And if I hadn't broken ankle in Alaska going skiing I probably would never have seen it. Because I had well you know, you feel what's the life, you know the youth is gone, you are up in years and what the heck. But after I once took a trip then I enjoyed it. I found all that warm reception and the welcome you got from and I had a hell of a lot of relatives you know. My brother is now in the summertime there fishing salmon, him and his two sons, two of his sons rather.

Tom : When did you come over to the United States?

Herb : In 1910. I was sixteen years on my way over so and not being a female I don't care how old a (laughs) category they put me in. Metolasa was incidently older than I am when he kicked off. He must have had an exciting life in between. Well anyway, I passed through England on the day when old King Edward was buried.

Tom : And where did you land?

Herb : I landed in Quebec. I came over on a goddamned cattle boat, may as well have been. You know in those days there were so many you know.

Tom : What did you do when you got there?

Herb : Well I had a cousin or I had several cousins, but I had a cousin in Wisconsin in a sawmill town there so I. This is what I was going to, to Wisconsin a place called Mason, Wisconsin in Bayfield County. I started to work the day after I landed so.

Tom : Why did you decide to come over?

Herb : I was cursed with seasickness for some reason or another. I guess I had kind of a poor digestive system or some damn thing because herring was a kind of a staple diet and it didn't agree with me. So between seasickness and too much herring in the diet I think this is what drove me away from home. I got along fine at home. There wasn't revolt against parental authority at all. I probably felt like most youngsters that I was misunderstood and all of that you know. We were several in the family and probably I had the most neurotic temper and disposition I don't know but anyway they were very concerned about me I guess. For years they had a bed ready for me to come home there was standing in the loft there, used to sleep. I sent home some money and they bought this special bed with bedclothes and everything and that was waiting for me all those years.

Tom : How long did you work in Wisconsin?

Herb : Oh I only worked there til the following spring. I left there in March 1911 and went to Sand Point, Idaho by train. And I woke up on the train the following morning. We were just west of Fargo and my money was gone. I must have been robbed during the night probably it dropped out of my pocket, went to sleep you know, your're young and you trust everybody and there I found myself with two bits in my pocket. I was going to Sand Point, Idaho and I was like the Frenchman says, "alone on the prairie and I couldn't speak a word of language" he said. Well so was I (laughs). I couldn't speak a word of language either. So I used that two bits. I didn't tell my partner. I didn't want to suspect him at all. He was a kind of a sporty sort of a guy but I wouldn't want to accuse anybody. Somebody got through my pocket and got it but that's neither here nor there anyway. But that's part of the minor tragedies of life when you are young you know and can't speak the language and facing the unknown, the strange conditions. So I bought a lunch box. At that time you could get a lunch for two bits and in there was salt. After I ate all the food everytime when I felt kind of gaunt I just took a little bit of salt and I drunk some water. So I reached Sand Point on a Saturday night and we went to work the next morning. He was quite a rustler. He knowed somebody that was there and he found out a place we could get to stay. And that man had a kind of important job in the mill. I think he was a scaler the people we are staying with, so he got us a job and I went to work for the Humbolt, no what the hell was the name, Humbolt I think Lumber Company in Sand Point.

Tom : And what did you do?

Herb : Oh I worked in the yard and we were handling heavy lumber and of course I was anxious for two things. I wanted to keep the job because I was broke and also when you are young you want to show off your strength you see. So the climate was strange to me. I left Wisconsin I think there was eight below zero

when I left Wisconsin and I got there and they had early spring weather but it was cold. The sun was hot but it was cold in the shade so when every chance I had I go and stand in the shade you see to cool off and the sweat be running so after I had worked there three days I came down pneumonia. And I spent eleven days in the hospital and about the longest days I've ever put in. You know, nothing to read, couldn't read much English anyway. And I didn't know anybody although the people I stayed with there they came and visited me and so did the fellow I came West with, but they were a long eleven days. The nurses there were pretty good. One of them there she was kind of a rough, the best looking one, she was kind of rough. Only thing I remember she spanked me on the rump one time and she said something but I didn't understand what the hell she said.

Tom : How long did you work there?

Herb : Well then I worked there all summer there for a while and then I found out about a place where I could get you know a few bits more a day. So I quit there and I went to a place called Dover, Idaho and went to work there. I worked there all summer til the mill shut down in the fall.

Tom : Then where did you go?

Herb : Then I went took in the ice harvest. We cutting ice there and I kind of caught a bad cold there so I quit there got into town and got a job. You catch one on the light chain you know and the big blocks of ice and you store them in the town. And then after that I think I put in a few days on the woods there with a fellow. I think I got canned if I remember right you see there was a cranky native there I worked with there falling timber and there I was a greenhorn kid you know I cound't talk too well and I guess he got disgusted anyway I think I got canned if I remember right. So then I went to work there wasn't much to do in you know wintertime so I was cutting cord wood, a fellow and I. He wasn't very good

so my partner he quit and I stayed there alone in that shack for awhile. Course I didn't get all the money wasn't much. But I never forget that place because I stayed in a small cabin there and the cabin was lined with newspaper and they were all newspaper that told about history of that part of the country. So I walked around that cabin at night when I had a lamp and read the history of the country there (laughs) on the wallpaper those newspapers and of course I picked up a little English too you know my vocabulary increased. But that blowed up why that was in the spring of 1912 I run into a young Swede there, a young husky Swede and we decided to go to Canada. He had known somebody there were railroad construction in Canada and they had some heavy construction going on there in British Columbia and we decided to go up there and he thought we had a job and when we came there there was no job so we had quite a journey. I never forget him though he could play mouth organ. So he was happy go lucky fellow no matter what it was he was a good mood he had a great big grin on his face. He was a real happy go lucky Swede from the southern part of Sweden, Boosland. And there he was walking ahead of me with that mouth organ. In later years you know after I read the Pied Piper of Hamline you know he remind me he was the Pied Piper you know and I was kind of trailing behind him through the snow (laughs). And so we got jobs and so on. I could tell you all of the history. God, we've crowd'd so much into my life in those days you know and especially when you are rustling for job. I never was any good at bumming you know. There was a part of this square head pride I guess. And so I guess I was too cowardly to steal and I was too proud to bum, so I lost a few meals along the way (laughs).

Tom : Where in Canada was this?

Herb : Oh in British Columbia took in Nelson. I got a job then after we on the double back there I got the job on the mill, on the sawmill. And well I was rebellious and my judgement wasn't too

good but I was rebellious. They had terrible food there and they had some butter so rancid it tasted like sugar. So one night I called for the butter on the table and I gathered up there and I took the whole goddamned shebang and I could gather up and throw the son of a bitch outside (laughs) and of course that didn't make me very popular! And they had a big black fellow was waiting on the table and I was lucky that he didn't clean my clock (laughs)! Well anyway I got on to Nelson. I got a job on the boat. I wasn't very big but I looked kind of husky and workwise I guess and active you know, quick on my feet and so I met that fellow on the street, mate of one of those rubber boats there so I got a job there for awhile. I had a partner there while he stayed I paid for the room rent so that took care of that but he took in another man so I had quite a responsibility there. Then I got pneumonia or bad cold anyway I forgot what it was so I laid off and he took my job and he like it so well so when I got well I didn't have the heart enough to, so I let him keep the job and I went to look for another job.

Tom : Where did you go?

Herb : Then I went to a place called Nelson Landing right on the end of Arrowhead Lake beautiful country in the spring of the year. A narrow lake with mountains coming up on both sides and you see flock of deers there you know and get on the boat at midnight and it took til afternoon til we come to a place called Arrowhead and then there is a short distance from there to Rubblestoke and so I got working around there in the woods you know without going to the details it was pretty good conditions and so on. And then in the spring of the year then I got a job in a place called Comaplex and it was quite an interesting place. It was a bay in from the lake and the sawmill there and there were no policemen of anykind and so the people had to police themselves you know. The only crime that was committed there that I know of just before we come

there a prostitute had been murdered and they never I guess discovered who had done that. But outside of that why the people seemed to get along pretty good without any policemen around.

Tom : Why do you think they got along?

Herb : Well I think because they had interests in common. When people, the reason there is so much crime in the city is the economic divisions between the have and the havenots, that's the major reason for crime. People have got to be something wrong with the people's mind if they have security, if they have a feeling of. There may be crimes against person due to a psychological and neurotic disturbance but that is only a minor portion of the population and so they got along because they have interest in common. They were practically on the same level. But then the racial question raised it's ugly head you see. There was some Hindus working there and some of the young people you know got a few drinks there a fellow we called, what the hell did we call him, we called him Teadybear. And he got a few drinks one Saturday night you know and he poppad off and the Hindus felt insulted and so they organized against and so we damned near had a riot there. But we managed to stop it. Especially a friend of mine a fellow from Oslo, a big Norgewian fellow used to be wrestler in his youngest days and still was a giant of strength but beside had a good nature. He could sing and he played a guitar happy go lucky fellow everybody liked him and quite a lady's man beside so he got along pretty well. And he kind of had to stop it. Even the Hindus respected him. The Hindus had some weight lifters there they had something they would lift but he was the only one of the whites that could lift them. They were professional then. But anyway we managed there but we had another one there that could show, there were some people from the Balkans states that worked there you know and they got into trouble with a he was an Anglo Saxon of some kind, American Indian and he

kind of wanted to treat them as inferiors you know and they come to a crash one day and they were going to knock hell out of him. Course everybody got into it. I'll never forget that incident because there was a little fellow you know, he was typical hoosier you can find in any riot. He couldn't do anything else so one of them fellows lost his hat and I can see him yet jumping up and down on the hat of that fellow you know, taking out his resentment of that fellow by jumping on his hat. Just showing the characteristics of people that were having the mob spirit.

Tom : How long were you there?

Herb : Oh I wasn't there very long, never stayed. I was just like I was driven by demons. I was in Rubblestone on Christmas and I got interested in a Swedish girl that worked in the hotel there and we got pretty good friends and after Christmas there I went out in another camp.

Tom : Can you tell me what kind of work you did at the camp?

Herb : Well you know they were mostly all manual labor you know, work with an axe, swamping trails and so on. I didn't have much experience yet, I think I was falling timber with one and of course falling timber there was different than in the long log you know for a fellow long logger out there it was just like cutting brush when you were working in the short log country, those big trees there. Even trimming the logs you were towed together and so on here it was only one man on the saw. Course now they have power saws is the difference since I left the woods. So then I run into another bunch of Swedes you know adventurous two brothers and another fellow. They were going up on a job above a place called Gulden and that Gulden is on the C.P.R., the Canadian Pacific. And they were building a road between Gulden and, it's all in that goddamn, I could let you glance through my second manuscript I have. Tells some of the things that happened. And so we went up there for that job and cut right away and there was no transportation.

He walked on the other end of the line getting close to Cranbrook and then doubled back. We got a contract there crossed them right away and we had quite a time in the spring of the year it was cold at night and we run out of money and our feet got sore getting them wet and traveling wasn't very long. It wasn't anything like the Long March of the Chinese or anything comparison or Hanibal crossing the Alpes or so on but still for us you know it was quite a deal. But there was one fellow in the bunch there you know he was an outstanding character. Hell of a good guy to get along with but he like to fight if he got into trouble if anybody would challenge him he could, he know how to handle himself. He got into all kinds of scraps.

Tom : Then up until the time where you were in Eureka in 1922 were you still just traveling around?

Herb : Oh yeah, well I come over here in 1914 then you see. I lost a toe. I went into railroad building out of Canlups what they call shortcut there across the Hope Mountains there in Canada ever to another place and in about forty miles there I think they had fourteen tunnels. It was very rough construction. And through a misunderstanding I worked in a trap tunnel. Now I don't think they have such a thing now. They use gas shovel to get in there. At that time they only had a steam shovel you see and of course they couldn't transport them in on the job. They would cut a tunnel through a big gravel cut you see and then they put in cross pieces on top see as you go along into the cut you open them and then you trap the dirt into a car you see. And I was cleaning out the track and I told him to hold the cover and the excited Yippo you know he it was all piece work we were working for and they were production hungry and I guess that scissorbill on top there he opened the trap and it pretty near killed me. But I hear it started to come so I stepped back and I couldn't get very far because the timber behind me had broken you see the timber

was that way broken in the middle down so I get back as far as I could but one rock hit another rock and rolled over and messed my toe. So there put me fifty-seven days in the hospital believe it or not for a broken toe. I got infection on it so they finally cut it off and I think the doctor was a dope fiend anyway and I was lucky I come out of there alive. That was quite a hospital, just a tent on top of a mountain. They had no nurse, the fellow that was nurse he had been a cobbler, couldn't make his living at that so he got himself a job as a male nurse in a hospital. And everybody were lousy I didn't know I was but they came and sat on my bunk there you see so everyone infected the other. And that fellow was an Englishman the male nurse and he had a mustache that stood out straight like that (gestures) you trained them sharp, I can see him yet. And he couldn't make coffee, could make tea alright but he made coffee the same as tea and course he just poured a cup of water on it, the coffee floated on top and he put sugar in it so one morning you know you get cranky laying there anyway so I told him about that, I didn't want no sugar in my coffee. And so one morning I looked at the cup and he says, "No sugar in your coffee this morning sir?" "No" I says, "And there's no coffee in it either" so when he was over I took the cup and I throw the son of a bitch out of the window (laughs). Well anyway I recovered and more jobs and so on and anyway I was there when the war started I went out to Vancouver there. That's about the time when the war started and I got a job in the haying. It's too many jobs you know I guess I have to tell you would wear out your time. But I rustled so I kept the wolf from the door, a few bucks you know. I took in the haying and had quite an experience there too to show you what poverty of people you know. Big family, poor people had, couldn't hire anybody. They couldn't pay those they hired and they couldn't feed you. So one day there the oldest son he was just a kid then he was driving the team and he was all right but he tipped the damn load over.

and of course the hay balled up you know hell of a pitch it back again you had a tough job. So he started to make excuses. So I told him I says, "Oh that's all right boy, don't blame yourself", I says, "if I had started as young as you have I wouldn't be able to do half as much" I told the kid. That night when we come in for supper it was plenty to eat but it was silence at the table. I guess he had told. Yeah, well the little things stick in your memory when you are young. I had a young second growth Norwegian. He was born here a red headed fellow and they had a farmer's couple they had a daughter there a big husky girl, an overgrown farm girl and she took a notion to my partner and she chased him all around the place I guess and I think and he got an inferiority complex. So he wanted to quit and so we quit and went into town. And he was very patriotic about the war you see and I have heard him pop off there at the drug store and telling them all you know he was very concerned about licking the Kaiser. So one Sunday morning we had mush for breakfast and we had blue skim milk and there was a big farm at that time he had a milk check of nine hundred dollars that month before and that took quite a lot of milk in those days so I didn't know what to think of. So I heard a pop so I said (laughs). I am ever religious you know so I said, "God must have a tough time to decide who he's going to favor." I says, "Now the Kaiser, the Germans say that he's on their side and the Allies say that God is on their side and how is he going to make a decision?" Well I could see the hair raising on the farmer's head you know. He says, "You know what the Bible says about a man that don't believe in God?" He said, well anyway he let me know that he was a fool. "Yeah, it may be true" I says, "But I have also heard there's no fool like an old fool!" (laughs) Had to have an answer. So I quit right after and went into Vancouver and shortly after that we came over here. We had to have money to you know to enter back into the states so I lend my partner money to get over and he sent it

back to me but if he had been dishonest I would have been stuck there you see! But anyway he got over here and I kind of lost track of him after.

Tom : Were you in the service during the First World War?

Herb : Yeah I got in for a few months.

Tom : Did you go anywhere?

Herb : No. We were ready to go overseas. We were supposed to be organized the thirteenth division of all things the lucky or unlucky or whatever. We were supposed to go to Siberia you see that's when they had that General Graves I think it was, expeditionary forces when they send there to help the Russian White Guards you know they always had to this democratic country had to see that the Czars interests was taken care of. So I think that I didn't mind so much if I was going, see otherwise there would be an experience anyway part of it adventure you know but I didn't like to go to Siberia. By that time you know I was getting class conscious enough and I read enough so I know pretty much what the score was.

Tom : What year was that?

Herb : That was in 1918.

Tom : And when was the first time you had heard of the I.W.W.?

Herb : Oh I heard that in British Columbia. I worked with a bunch of Swedes. I always had a lot of Swedes up there you know and I got along pretty good with them and in fact when I came down from British Columbia I talked more Swedish than Norwegian by that time. I murdered the English language properly at that time even worst than I do now. So a fellow came into the camp. He was Southerner, he looked like a what do you call those people down in the Everglades there. He was a dark fellow you know maybe French probably even a little I don't know wouldn't be surprised if he was both colored blood and Indian blood in him but the principal part

was white you know. What the hell do they call those people down there? Well anyway they had a certain name for it. Maybe you remember Helen?

Helen : Not mulattos? (Helen is Herb's wife.)

Herb : No anyway he had literature with him and so on. I have heard about the Wobblies before. I have heard about the strike of the year before there they had a strike on the railroad. I never got up around there then.

Tom : What year was that?

Herb : That was in 1912 I think yeah they had a strike there on the Canadian Northern. Joe Hill was there too and he wrote a song about it, the song called the Canadian Northern Strike. "The gunnysack contractors have all been" what the hell does it go now well anyway and he came in there. He had literature with him and he talked about the I.W.O.. And that's the first time I run into one who had a rigging as we call it you know there was a delegate and had literature with him and had experience about the organization.

Tom : What did you think about him?

Herb : Well course I didn't know much about it but they hit me some of the things, the rank and file control and better conditions and I didn't see no reason that they shouldn't have better conditions because be honest with you even the American propaganda is that everybody that come to this country leaves such a bad conditions that there's paradise no matter what you do which wasn't the case with me. I had a better standard of living at home than I had here part of the time and at least more freedom and so on. I wasn't so restricted by employment, control of the employers no organization and so on. So what I heard appealed to me and of course they put their best foot forward too. They tell you the things that sound good, everybody does. Everybody who has some program or plan they are out to you know there is a certain amount of brainwashing going on and nobody have a monopoly

on that. But the only thing is you feel that the radicals by and large have the best of the argument because all they need to do is to tell the truth and then they have a good argument.

Tom : Did you hear much about the I. . . after that then?

Herb : Oh yeah. Then when I come over here I heard Big Thompson you know, Jim Thompson that big giant speaker and he was a wonderful speaker. He pretty much stereotyped. He didn't have very much of a variety of a speech but he had the best voice of any platform speaker I have ever heard and that includes them all. I have heard Teddy Roosevelt and I have heard the other Roosevelt and a lot of them. I didn't hear Debs I am sorry to say but James Thompson had a wonderful voice, strong, penetrating, warm, sonorous. So I heard him on the schedule you see but I wasn't quite ready. I had a Lutheran Norwegian complex then being different and being a radical. I read stuff in the newspaper beginning to read you know and it was all bad you know. Well it sounded good but I didn't want to be asked. I had a goddamned sense of respectability and of course that's a bad thing for any radical to have you know a sense of respectability I guess to a certain extent it could probably linger on yet you know. I don't know but it doesn't much you see but I did at that time and that must have had something to do with it. It wasn't fair it was more that I still had that touch of religion, Lutheran religion you know still after I came to this country at times I still said my prayers. But of course now to be truthful I have no such religion. It sounded a nice story, a lot of nice stories in the Bible. The sermon on the Mount, Ruth and the book of Ester and all of that there good nice reading and all of that. But for me it is just part of the history of the human race. Our hell is right here and our heaven is what we manage to make of whatever we have. But that's beside the point I don't want to go into that but that's my feeling now but at that time I still had a certain amount of it although I didn't practice much religion. I was kind of a touch of being a bad boy and so

on. But I still had a sense of social consciousness. I always have and I still have yet a strong belief in that part of the Golden Rule of wanting to do unto others as I want them to do unto me. I'll never loose that regardless of any religious concept because I think that has nothing to do with religion. I think there is something that is inherent in humankind. I think the old Vikings practiced the old pagans, practiced as much as they do now, probably more even those who hate one another I think were more honest in the social relation than we are today than we are today, than we are today.

Tom : How did your feelings then change about the I.W.W.?

Herb : You mean?

Tom : Well first you didn't -

Herb : Why I dropped out you mean?

Tom : No.

Herb : Oh how I come to change. Well then of course there were strikes coming on and so on but it took me a long time and I heard about it a lot and god I didn't believe they was something, there was a block there. I tell you the Everett Massacre had a lot to do with it. When they came out during the trial. You see I don't have, I may be claiming too much when I sound nationalistic that's a lot of bullshit I guess in some old people but I think maybe because of the simple life some of the square heads as we call them you know my own race I think I had a most trusting, they have a tendency to trust easy you know. They are simple minded. They trust easy and when they read something they can't conceive of anybody putting all that lies in the paper and of course they have the monopoly of propaganda you see they tell you about what was going on. The terrible thing the Wobblies did it was almost a curse on. Jesus Christ it was something, those people were terrible! They didn't have no sense of religion, of patriotism of anything. They were just terrible

people you see that's the newspaper came in then you see. And they never give them credit for anything that was good. Now I can truthfully tell people and look them right in the eye and say that the I. W. O. did more good to change conditions with less members and less money than any organization that ever hit this country and I can truthfully say it even though I was out for a long time but that was over a personal proposition.

Tom : When did you join the I. W. O.?

Herb : I joined in 1917 about the time just before the big strike started the big lumber strike, the big general lumber strike started.

Tom : Why did you join?

Herb : Well (laughs) I am not going to give you any dramatic account of that or anything credit because there was a French Canadian I worked with in the woods there and he was a hobble. He was a member at that time and when he met me in town there he started to. "Well" I says, "on some of these days I'm going up there and join." I was for them and bought their papers and so on but to actually get out a card you know when you have not belonged to any organization before. And I had a bad example up in Canada. I joined some fraternity organization that didn't pan out so I was kind of shying away from joining something that would turn out bad. So he told me to get up there. "Well come with me up to the hall". "Oh some day". "Now" he says, "now is the time". So I went along with him and I never forget it because about less than two years after, by that time I had become a firebrand and active and I met him in town I was stationary delegate in town because you know we couldn't have no secretary. They raided the hall and so on so the stationary delegate was sort of like a boat logging delegate you see and so they call them a stationary delegate instead of a secretary. So I run into him. I wanted to take out credentials. "No" he said, he didn't have the education,

he wasn't qualified for the job of being this and that. He gave me all the excuse in the world. So I was half mad and half joshing him you know. I say, "You are a hell of a man" I says, "you got me into this goddamned outfit and now what I want you to do something (laughs) do you take your part?" Course I wasn't sore at him or anything.

Tom : What town was that?

Herb : That was right here in Seattle. You see the war was on then even before the Centralia trouble you know there was especially out West they were hostile as hell you know. Oh Christ yeah they raided halls and of course they used the lumber barons, used the patriotic fervor you see to inflame the hooser element, the scissorbill element to do the dirty work for them. They could sit back and laugh then like for some poor Austrian up here at Cederwooly, or outside of Cederwooley. He refused to buy any bonds, any war bonds which should be voluntary affair. Well they took and dragged him behing an automobile and just killed him of course and just dragged him behing an automobile, tied a rope on him. And in that Grays Harbor county there were men found hung to trees and everything. But at that time you know I was still, it was after I got out of the army then when I became real active. They didn't put credentials on me before because I was pretty well known with the loggers you know before that time. I was young and full of pee and vinegar you know so I was kind of half popular I guess so they wanted me to take out credentials. I didn't know what the hell to do with them how to approach them so I turned them in again but I kept my card of course. But then when I come out there was more trials going on and money was needed and job I was out there and that was in 1919 when I first really got active.

Tom : Did you have any trouble because you were an I.W.O. member then?

Herb : No, no. I didn't expose myself in the army but of course I

couldn't help myself was always up to something. I had more luck than sense and of course one of the things is that basically you know I guess I acted like a big innocent hoosier but when it comes to any action I was in all kinds of. I could have got in the short time I was in the army there was three different occasions I could have gotten into serious trouble and I didn't understand that at that time. I was as bad as a fellow we called Harris Smith. He came down from Alaska after the Centralia trouble. Well he had been up in Alaska where every thing was free and easy you know you speak your mind and so what you know. There was more of the pioneer spirit up there you know and the people hadn't had the restriction. So when he heard about the hosilities against the Wobblies he went up to the police station and he planted his red card on the desk and he says, "I hear you are looking for Wobblies?" Well if they hadn't think he was crazy they probably would have killed him (laughs). Or else thrown him in the can and beat him up. Later I met the same fellow but I digress. I got to tell you something about the First World War.

(End of side one, tape one)

I worked with him in the early spring just before I got into the army and I worked with him in Tacoma and we worked on a construction job on a building. And we had a slave driver that was carpenter foreman. Most of these goddamned carpenter, these wood butchers you know were pretty rough anyway and that open shop I guess that time. So he got pretty sassy to us and he. "Well go and look so more you are looking for some forms". The rest of them had sense to not say anything but I told them there are no forms there. I says we couldn't find any. "Well" he says, "go and look some more don't stand around there." And chewed the rag and so I says, "You go and take a flying" and so on for yourself. And he says, "I'll do that in a minute." Well I says, "Okay" so I took right after him and he took out of the building.

And my partner keep nettling me all day. I was going to forget about it but he keep nettling me you know, he wanted to get me to. So I went there and I challenged the foreman right at the gate there when he was through at night. Course I got canned there immediately, whether I got canned or quit I don't know, remember. And I challenged him but then he tried to talk me over to it. "Well", he says, "I didn't mean anything" he says. "I talked to you like a father talked to your son." "No" I says, "you don't have to. I wouldn't be your son anyway but you could talk to me like a man you son of a bitch." Anyway it didn't come to blow or anything but my partner he wanted me to see that I got into fight you see because there was another fellow there he tells me I forgot all about that. He claimed I took him by the neck and I held him over the building you see he was a hardboiled bastard. They were rough in those days you know when you had no organization. That's when you learn to appreciate an organization like the I.W.O. or a union you see. I worked for a short time on a building job in San Francisco there and the superintendant there was around there his name incidently was McDonald. Never said anything to me but a young carpenter there he abused him something awful over nothing because he wouldn't turn out enough work.

Tom : Were you involved in any strikes before 1919?

Herb : No, walkouts and so on, no real strike, no real strike. I should be ashamed to tell you after being here in this country for so long. But no I hadn't. Protest and walkout over chuck and incidently but no organized strike, no.

Tom : Where were you when the Centralia incident happened?

Herb : I was on my way, I met that fellow as I told you when I come into to town here and he wanted a rigging slinger and I was on my way to Centralia on answer the call for help. Britt Smith you know or the organization down there he was the

secretary they wanted help down there. Didn't know what was going to happen but they wanted to get some footloose members so I was going to do that. By that time you know I was right in the fanatical fever then, anything goes. And so I came into town and Eric a fellow by the name of Eric Greenburg wanted a rigging slinger and I went out south of Tacoma by close to a place called McKenna outside of Tacoma and I went to work slinging rigging for him and that happened three days afterwards so I missed it. I had run into then to some sissorsbill in the camp so I got kind of rough with him and of course they thought they had it their own way when they heard about this you know. About the Wobblies killing all these exsoldiers you know just shooting into a parade and killing innocent people and Jesus there was an awful propaganda came out. So he started getting - well anyway I thought I had better get out of here. This is no place to get that. So I went into town to Tacoma and there was somebody on the bus there that was trying to nail me and I suspected such. I didn't know but the way he acted so as we were coming on the outskirts of Tacoma as the bus was starting up to stop there to let out somebody then I waited til they were ready to start up and I got off myself and the other fellow didn't get off there. At that time they were searching everybody on the street that looked like a working man have overalls no matter how well he behaved himself. Went out to camps and lined them up against the wall like just something like a Valentine's Massacre on a smaller scale only they didn't kill anybody. Go through their belongings and searched them for cards and so on and one thing that helped me as a camoufluge and beside it kept me warm I had an army overcoat and an army shirt and so on.

Tom : So when did you go down to Centralia then?

Herb : So then I never got to Centralia then before in the early

part of 1921 when I was going to California on another appeal for help in the redwoods so I was going down there and answer the appeal part of the "flying squadron" you know as we call it in those days. I appealed later on when I had a job on the general organizational committee I issued some calls for help myself and I got response several times. We had a bunch of young fellows then you know they could, always young husky fellows could get a job in the woods you know and nobody was getting rich anyway so it wasn't that much of an economic pressure one part was as good as the others so you could always get a few fellows. And those who came were ready to go places you know and do things and they were responsive and active. They were not afraid of anything and so they were pretty useful, the "flying squadron".

Tom : What did you do in Centralia?

Herb : Well then I didn't do anything. I just met there. I got acquainted with Elmer's brothers and the fellow I wrote about Tom Nash was down there as a secretary at that time. They had opened the hall and later on was charged with criminal syndicalism the same year and he was convicted. He and a fellow by the name of Maudy. And they were both characters you know they were like something out of a book both of them! That Maudy he was about eighty years old when he went over to a picket line over in Idaho there you know and he got into an argument with a scab and there was about two hundred pounds of young man and he knocked him on his ass. And when they got before the judge even the judge had to laugh when he was accused of assault and battery. And there was old horse face Kentucky Maudy! (laughs) And he had a drawl. He had a slow drawl when he talked.

Tom : Which of Elmer's brothers did you see?

Herb : Oh I think there was Glenn and Harry I think.

Tom : What were they like?

Herb : Well it was so long ago that wasn't so long. Glenn if I remember there was either Glenn or Jim but Glenn seems to be more familiar to me and he was more talkative you know and we sort of had more in common there and I was around with him quite a bit there then for a day or two.

Tom : Was he a member of the I.W.O.?

Herb : I'm not too sure. I never saw his card, no I never saw his - course I continue on then I went to Portland, from Portland I went on to California to the redwoods. But there was one incident I was going to tell you was this. That that man the first one I met that had a Wobbly credentials and there is a coincidence, a strange thing happened. The day when I was in San Francisco when I was on my way to give myself up on bail to go to San Quentin, who would turn in to the defense office but this man, that southerner what I had met up in British Columbia how many years before. That was in '23 about eight or nine years before, there he was. But then I was more in the news than he was you know. I had been cleared on my before you see I had four trials in California and during that time they had it in the paper and that trial in Eureka was a sort of a peculiar trial you know. I was the only one that was not during that time in Eureka I was the only one not convicted on criminal syndicalism. All of them were nailed and I was lucky to have a good jury and I had friends that worked on the jury I think. I didn't know of anything about that but that was I think there were pretty well influenced by the time they start the voting for my guilt or innocence. If it hadn't been one woman she has been dead a long time and there was no sex interest either because she was old enough to be my mother. In fact she had daughters who were school teachers that were as old as I. She said you must have had a tough time during the summer preparing for this trial and never being able to work so she insisted that I take some money. And I didn't. I got along all right and I was kind of independant, I didn't

want to take money from a woman anyway. But I did take it and I was going to pay it back later. It was ten dollars. And I never had a chance to things happened so much. I got in and of course later in that year or the year after that I went to Quentin and I got a picture, a fellow that did some good landscape pictures see and I got one of them and I was going to give it to her the first thing I got out. It prayed on my mind and I never had a chance to pay her that back. I could have done it from Quentin as far as that is concerned but I didn't want to put her on the spot by such a thing you know. Although I could have gotten the defense committee to do it but then that's history now and you can't argue with history. You can't argue with the past. Anyway I never did and when I found out I wrote a letter up there and the daughter answered the letter and she was dead.

Tom : When after the incident in Eureka with Elmer, when did you meet him after that?

Herb : He wanted me to be a witness, god knows why, in Sacramento so I went there. They had two members there were tried for criminal syndicalism and I was one of them that was a witness there. So I was there then and then our first trial after we were nailed you see.

Tom : As a witness what did you say?

Herb : Well I don't remember what I said. We admitted to membership. You had to admit your membership in order to qualify as a witness. And of course that's all the testimony they had, our admitting you see. So things have changed a little since now you see. When you think about what they by with now Christ all mighty things times have really changed a little. All they had against us that we admit being a member of an organization that teach, aid and abetted criminal syndicalism you see and then they went on to define syndicalism so nothing resembles as much to me as a dog chasing

his own tail. It went around in a circle. You didn't know there was no beginning or no end to it. You teach, did and abetted criminal syndicalism and then they went on to define criminal syndicalism what it was you see. I think I have a booklet on I should really lend that to you if you are interested but I have only one of them so I very concerned about that with names on the fellow that we go down later on and look and see what I can find. But that was all and we became known as the ten witnesses and we had three trials before they nail us and that was during the Klu Klux Klan recruiting in California about that time they were making quite a sweep through the West there. That scissorbill element now is in favor of Nixon, join the Klu Klux Klan. Same type they may be dead some of them in new places but the same type of people, common poor people would fall for such crap you see.

Tom : What year did you first go down there then as a witness?

Herb : That was in April '22. I had a trial in Eureka in October '21 and I was clear and I continue my activities around Eureka up until I was instigator of getting Elmer down there you know. Must have heard about him up here and I was on the committee to get that meeting organized in Eureka and we had a hall. We had a big hall and everything else. We had the Eagles hall. We had a good hall in the central part of town, we expected a good meeting. But it was either ignorance on the part of some of the committee or else sabotage because I was out in the woods working and there I come back into town on the weekend you see. We had organized a meeting and there were handbills we had decide what there were going to be on the handbill. There they had a glaring red handbill saying, "The Fighting Attorney From Centralia". Tell you talk about a red flag to a bull but there was n thing. The newspaper came out used that as an example here is the man that was responsible for killing

all these patriotic American Legionnaires in Centralia. And this is the man coming down here to speak and you ought to have one of the stuff they had, I have some of that you may be interested in. I don't think I send that to you. They are very interesting quotations from the paper and if you will want to type some of that off and give it to me again I let you have all of that.

Tom : In Sacramento when you were a witness, what was Elmer like in the courtroom as a lawyer?

Herb : Oh wonderful yeah, he was wonderful. The only thing of course like I said the weakness with Elmer is that he trusted too easy. His strenght was also his weakness. He had a overwhelming faith in the goodness of his fellow man.

Tom : Did you meet Elmer then after that?

Herb : Well of course Elmer there of course he wasn't happy about that incident in Eureka and I guess he noticed that I didn't shiver and shake over the incident so he wanted me to room with him, so I roomed with Elmer then you see the first time he was there. Stayed in the same room. I have been thinking about it afterwards when you hear all these propoganda, that's digressing but I got to laugh when I think about that because I think we were about as far from having any tendency that as any human being had. I said to myself if I had spent a thousand years in prison I would never be having any sexual interest in another man (laughs). And I think Elmer was the same thing. But I remember that clerk you know and I didn't say and he says, I don't know whether we had double I don't remember if there was two beds in there or we slept in the same bed or not. I don't know because I wasn't concerned about that part of it but we roomed together at the time and so on. But the clerk you know he looked, I was a young man at that time. I did look younger than I do now by hair was black anyway instead of white and he said he would just as

soon sleep with a snake he says than sleep with another man. Well looking at it from one angle I think I would too probably but anyway that's beside the point but it kind of sort of amuses me.

Helen : This is gettin a bit sexy now!

Herb : Yeah it is. Well you read about so much of that crap today.

Tom : So how long did you and Elmer room together?

Herb : Well during the trial. But all I remember this is what I remember was I don't remember how the trial was conducted. I think he well we managed to get a hung jury and that's as good as you could expect at that time. In fact I think we would have got a hung jury if we had had Elmer the last time although he was always optimistic about the jury. He was optimistic because it was hard for Elmer to believe that a person could be a no good son of a bitch you know. It was hard for Elmer to believe. And I know when he was speaking to the jury he had a strong voice that carried good. He used good reasoning, he was emotional and dramatic and they were lining the corridor you could see every door full with people. They were listening they were coming down from everywhere and listening when he spoke to the jury. And I think he probably would have been, but one of our codefendants you see, I don't want to go into that, he may be dead now, the poor fellow he was in bad conditions. He was the one, he was on the executive board and he is the one who really organized that idea of filling the jail that we were going to defy the criminal syndicalism law by filling the can. Well I wasn't quite sold on that but I happened to be there as a witness at the time so the circumstaacial evidence you get swept into it. Anyway he was one of them that never showed up when the time come to go to prison. Now that's beside the point. I was probably foolish. I didn't have friends to pay my bail, it wasn't very much. It was a very unusual case you see before we when were first charged before we

had a trial the bail was much higher than it was. Then it was reduced and after we had been convicted, tried and convicted and sentenced then the god damned judge reduced it to a ridiculous amount! Well of course I don't blame anybody now as I look back after taken out it was just my fanaticism god damn it, no white feather. But you don't do any good laying in prison. You can do more good out in the field talking to workers, but that's beside the point. We can't argue with the past. So if Elmer back to him, he wanted that we were going, he thought by sort of getting one of them shysters in Sacramento that were well acquainted, the home guard lawyer that was well acquainted and had a reputation of being a shyster that were sort of under cover work getting the right jurors and so on. But he didn't realize although he was nice to us you know I mean to our face, that son of a bitch was still working for the other interests you see. He didn't care so long as he get his pay and he was getting paid far more than Elmer was getting for taking the case but he was a famous attorney there and the fellow you know he thought well we get one of them and whatever he does to get an acquittal. He got an acquittal shit, we all got convicted! So that was that. So I did send you the copy of that there speech when we were before, when the judge sentenced us and all that.

Helen : Was that where the women came out and put their arms around you?

Herb : No that when I was acquitted in Sacra - They didn't throw their arms around me but the newspaper that's a part of the god damned propaganda in the Eureka paper that was the year before when I was acquitted.

Tom : Now the fact that Elmer hired this guy to try and get a -

Herb : Elmer didn't, no no Elmer didn't. No he was busy elsewhere but he no doubt if he had, he turned it over to this fellow he was a member of the executive board, fellow by the name of Beasley in Frisco and I we were opposed to it after this.

We wanted to defend ourselves. We wanted to repeat what the silent defenders did. Show contempt for the whole farce you see even if you didn't defend us. The worse we could get would be a conviction and we probably get it by spending thousands of dollars to defend ourselves so the hell with them. We would just say nuts to you, you son of a bitch, without having that feeling or leave that kind of an expression without putting it in to words you understand. And the silent defenders did they just sat there with folded arms and they just looked at the jury there and that hasn't got enough publicity you know. That's quite an incident in American jurisprudence when those defendants sat there. I forgot how many there were a slew of them but that was fellows that were picked up during the war.

Tom : After you were convicted did you see Elmer again? When did you see him next?

Herb : The last time, that was long after I saw him then I didn't see him. The last time I saw him the time when I come through in Sacramento and he was setting there, sat on the table and he had a dreamy look in his eyes. It was a bright spring morning and he had the wonderlust. He wanted to go someplace and I asked him where he wanted to go and he says he would like to go to South America. That was the last time I saw Elmer.

Tom : That was in Sacramento?

Herb : No no in Centralia I come through from California. I had made several trips to California after I came out of prison I go up here and work and I took trips to California afterwards but I never was in Sacramento since then.

Tom : What year was that?

Herb : When I was convicted?

Tom : No when you saw Elmer the last time.

Herb : Ah that must have been in the spring of '29.

Tom : How did Elmer look then?

Herb : He looked pretty good although had some operation then. He hadn't had his last one but he had had one or two then. You know this ulcers operation I guess that's probably necessary sometime but I believe diets and other things will do better than that but then that's history and no use arguing.

Tom : Do you think Elmer was still as optimistic then as when you saw him before?

Herb : Well he probably wasn't. No he probably wasn't but he still had had that nature of it. He still had that that was his inherent nature it wasn't optimism probably but that was his, he had to live that way, it was apart of his character. It was apart of his inherent nature even though he was naturely he was realistic enough to be pessimistic about the chances to but he was working for and what kill him was his effort to get the men out of prison in Walla Walla. And as far as I remember I don't think they were out yet.

Tom : Do you think he ever regretted anything he had done before?

Herb : I don't know. You can't read people's minds that way you know. I wasn't that under the time when I was no time for anything to regret then. It was just go ahead full steam ahead so that's hard to tell you see. There was only you may say a brief period I don't claim to be no authority on Elmer Smith at all. There was a brief period but the circumstances, the conditions was such that I felt that in that short time I probably had a better chance to judge his character and his personalty than some people that known him for years. When two men sit with army rifles in the hall and you sit in another corner with him and the vigilante bastards outside are like a bunch of howling wolves and probably the only reason if they have had whiskey enough for all whole bunch there they probably would have strung us up just to be doing something. They took us out and took out pictures and insulted us and all

that kind of stuff. We paid no attention to them and we paid no attention when they come in there. Some son of a bitch come over there, young fellow I don't know if he was a second road square head or what the hell he was. He looked at me he says, "You don't look like a bad fellow", he says, "you don't look to me like a bad fellow." "Well" I says, "who in the hell says I was" and I looked at him I says, "You don't look like a bad fellow either", I says, "but what the hell are you doing with that outfit?" I told him (laughs).

Tom : Was there anything you didn't like about Elmer?

Herb : (pause) No nothing basically. The thing that probably slightly irritated me at times was part of his goodness. That probably irritated me at times because I probably had you know I wasn't quite as optimistic as but I still have I make distinctions too much between friends and enemies. I go the limit for people I consider my friends and I may not go the limit I may not have the guts and ability to go the limit for people I consider my enemies but I'm not losing any sleep over what happened to them!

Tom : Do you think there were things that other people didn't like about Elmer?

Herb : No I wouldn't say that. Probably there was the same thing what I'm telling you now that he had a starry eyed look on the world for a man that had that experience and so on but that was the wonder of the man. And I think probably even Nash, probably grouchy Tom, probably would feel the same way about it like I do but that wasn't that we didn't dislike him. We respected him you couldn't help but like him. In fact it was the general opinion was that afterwards when they settled down when things changed in the thirties during the time when they took the criminal syndicalism law off the books here on the statue here in Washington about that time if Smith had run for office I think he would

have been a governor of the state, that's my opinion. He had a good personalty he was a good speaker. He was trusted and he was liked that's my general description of the man.

Tom : Did you know any of the other people in his family?

Herb : No I wasn't well acquainted there. There are people around I could take you out too but they haven't had that incident they have known about him speaking there's an old Fred Hanson that lived down in the Jack Hotel down there in his eighties. Hell he saw him in the local meetings around here probably more than I did. I was in California you see when he was up here and another fellow by the name of Fred Strom down here a Swede also in his eighties, quite rugged man yet. He no doubt had heard and seen Smith a lot of times when he was up here. Probably even more meetings than I did because -

Helen : They don't talk as good as you do.

Herb : I don't know if they talk, Fred Ström do well. The only thing about Fred Ström he is a character. He is the one who gave his card to the University when he quit the organization. He didn't quit it at first but he thought it was the funeral here you know when they closed the old hall. But he still donate money to the organization and he is loyal to the memory of the organization but he is a terrible right winger in politics. Jesus Christ I wouldn't be surprised if he is for Nixon. All I can do is to listen to him because I respect him for the past so I don't argue with him at all but Jesus Christ you know he become awful conservative lately and he doesn't understand the passing trend. He don't understand the trend of the young people that we are going through an era of change, of great change. The thing they object to what some people object to about the young people they try not to understand the changes. They don't want to be identified with the past even if they put old patches on new overalls. That's a part of their protest against

the difference in the old days we put new patches on old overalls. We wore them out working even those who cannot even get a job you see they'll have overalls and they will put old patches on new overalls where they don't need it so that is quite a social distinction. I may sound corny but it is part of the change course there are many other things. Fred don't and of course I think he is raised prejudiced about the colored people and of course I don't want to talk about that. Christ I have met black people I didn't like no better than some of the whites that's for goddamned sure, but on general principle I feel the only group of people in this country, the only race that ever bagged and crawled to get here that were forced here. The goddamned would be superior Caucasians have a responsibility for the goddamned greusome things they did and I don't stand much crap about the running down because they are black and so on.

Tom : Do you remember a time when Elmer asked you in a court room to quote from the Declaration of Independence?

Herb : Yeah (laughs) and I wouldn't have remembered!

Tom : Can you tell me about that?

Herb : Well he did. And the judge said, "He'll do no such a thing!" (laughs) and I was glad!

Tom : Which trial was this?

Herb : Oh that was the trial in Sacramento, the first trial. Then we had a second one, who in hell did we have then? I don't think we had Smith a second time and then we had that other lousy son of a bitch and he sent us over. Whatever they did then, I don't know what took place but the goddamned chairman of that jury was so nervous that he couldn't hold the paper, he shook like a leaf when he read the verdict. And the judge I think thought he was going to be shot right there. He sulked down when we were talking to him you know (laughs) fellows like myself you know it probably

looked like I was going to charge right up there and grab him!

Helen : I just bet you did!

Herb : And god you know you could hardly see his god damned pale face up above the bench there. But all the things that was said the thing I got the most kick out of was a fellow by the name Larue. He had been in the Merchant Marine I think they said he had been on the submarines service whether he did or not that reporter from the Sacramento what the hell was Sacramento Star. Well they wanted to blow us up there you know he blowed me up there. I had never been in Alaska as a logger and a miner at that time but he thought that was a very dramatic statement to make. He was trying to make me out that I was some kind of a John Wayne or some god damned thing.

Helen : An adventurer!

Herb : Yeah. But Larue said, the judge says you know if you have anything to say and he spoke with a kind of a slow drawl. I don't know if he was from the South but he talked very sort of a dragged out and he said, "No", he says to the judge you know. And he had kind of a grin on his face and he made a sweep of his hand. "Go ahead and enjoy yourself" and goddamnit you could see the face of that judge. I never saw the expression change so. Larue I think was about the youngest in the bunch course they were all mostly young people well all but Smidt the fellow from the executive board. He was the oldest.

Helen : Do you have that picture of you and Cleo could show Tom what you looked like more or less these days?

Herb : Well you have that picture. I don't have it. Well Jesus that don't make no difference what I looked like.

Helen : No but you looked slightly different.

Herb : I did show him what I looked like in green horn when I came

to this country.

Helen : But that was when you were only sixteen.

Tom : Do you know if Elmer ever went to New York to work on the Sacco and Vanzetti case?

Herb : That I don't really. (He shows me a picture of him in New York with black hair and a strong imposing man) Now there is I coming down there is one of them surprise wonders coming down the street there. I did show you that before. That was my first wife there Cleo. She got cabin fever in Alaska and we call it quits.

Tom : Do you know if Elmer -

Herb : No I don't really. I really don't know that much you see. I didn't there was so much happening in our own life you see that there were so many things they were all. If they had been something just one incidence I tell you I remember it more but. (He shows me a photo of himself) I have shown you that. That's when I was a young emigrant you see I was between sixteen and seventeen.

Tom : Did you know Upton Sinclair?

Herb : No I never met him. But incidently Christ all mighty I made a kind of a silly decision there. They were sending the book to the headquarters and it was the new edition of The Cry for Justice and by god of all the people they would send it to they sent it to me to review the goddamned book. I don't think I have the review in here there was at one time but it was taken out I think. Yeah, Cry For Justice, that's a new edition. No but I know people that knew him. (He finds the review) Yeah this is it. And I'm long winded as hell that's why Tom Nash said, "Yes"he says, "I had a thirty-four page message with the margin written in from H.M. the other day" he says, "telling me that there was a letter on the way!" (laughs)

Tom : Did you know George Vanderveer?

Herb : Yeah I met him a few times but not on intimate basis. I was up to the office a few times and he got so grouchy I guess it was he had stomach trouble and of course probably drink too much. And his Basset he just died recently too. He was kind of an admirer he trained under Vanderveer and he developed a disposition like old Vanderveer. So one time I was up there and he tried to grouch me and I says to him, "What the hell's the matter with you people. You act like a man eating tiger that has been fed on raw meat!" I told him. But of course he wasn't a man that trusted much of people. I guess he kind of probably lost respect that we didn't do more effort to get the fellows out of Walla Walla and I think he is true. I think were you know of course in the long run that the hell can you do probably know how to settle with violence but sometime the only thing certain people understand is fear, is fear and that's why some of them are afraid now. I don't think that settles anything. I don't think it solved any social problem in the long run but the immediate problems it has a kind of level out a little bit. And I think if we had probably been a little bit more militant at that time they had a membership about this. But you must also remember that most of our members were practically were people who had been un-organized loggers beforehand and we took in and to pay their dues and I think were loyal enough to the organization but the majority of them were even class conscious and they didn't quite understand the class alignment and so on and so forth.

Tom : Did you know Captain Coll?

Herb : No. But there was a fellow by the name Boomer. Have you run into his name?

Tom : How do you spell that ?

Herb : Boomer wasn't his name he called himself I think he became

I'm not so sure of him but he wrote a lot there and he was hanging around Centralia a whole lot and I think he was one of them. Do you run into Union Record in the library?

Tom : Yes, I read that.

Herb : There's a lot of stuff there by Anne Louise Strong, her what the hell, Anise she went by.

Tom : Did you know her?

Herb : Yeah I met her. I missed a chance to have a good interview with her because I could judge that much that she was interested to have a talk with me. And I let on like I didn't understand it and I was at the political meeting here in the thirties when they had what they called a Commonwealth Federation there was a branch of the Democratic Party. In fact it was the strongest faction of the Democratic Party at that time, the left wing of the Democratic Party, the Washington Commonwealth Federation when she was at the meeting in Everett and a friend of mine had dragged me out there you know. They all of them was dressed and I had blue loggers mackinaw on so I guess probably you know when you stand out different than the rest of them you know that were dressed with collars and neckties and what have you. So anyway and of course there is a sort of a nostalgia among certain people here about the Wobblies. you see some of them that had done nothing for the Wobblies in the past in fact were fighting the Wobblies afterwards, there are a certain element now that like to glory in the tradition of the I.W.O. in the Northwest and what was done and of course did a lot of exaggeration going on too but whether that was the case then or not I don't know. But when you go to any meetings there why you get yourself noticed you know because that friend of mine he give me a lot of free publicity and he died from fever when I was up in Alaska.

Tom : What was Anne Louise Strong like?

Herb : Well she was a big, what you would call a handsome woman. She wasn't beautiful, she was a big robust woman. I would say as far as I know judging by her dress and so on, handsome shapely woman. She was probably a little too big from a stand point of likes and dislikes from a male standpoint but she had a good personality, good speaker and as you know if you have read some of it she was a good writer and I thought she was a wonderful person. Course I never got acquainted with her like you know what I mean as on a personal basis but of course you read her stuff in the Union Record and at the meeting. I was at the meeting when her father spoke, Reverend Shorter he was a preacher here in town you know Shorter and there was a Kate Sadler was a Socialist speaker and she was militant. I don't know if she had a card but she was friendly to the I.W.O.. And we took her away they had arrested one time at the meeting we took her away from the police we were bad enough to do that. That wasn't only Wobblies but there were the crowd that was there and by god they took Kate Sadler away from the police. There weren't enough policemen there and of course they didn't fight back and it didn't come to any blows.

Tom : This is a poem that Anne Louis Strong wrote about Elmer Smith.

Herb : Oh!

(End of side 2, tape 1)

Herb : Helen is a good reciter. Is that too small print for you to read Helen?

Helen : (she reads poem) "Behind him in the courtroom, Sits his wife. Charming and young, Daughter of a judge, Accustomed for long years, To view courts only, From the upper side. Not from the bench, Of prisoners' relatives. Near her, The mother of Elmer, A gracious lady in black, With crisp white lace and hair, Sits waiting, For the life or death, Of her son. He is more hated, Than all the others, By

the business men of Centralia, For he was the educated man, Of their own class, Who came into their meetings, And told them, Of rotten conditions. In which their own members, Were implicated. He was schoolteacher and lawyer, The popular director, Of boys' athletics, But he gave his brain, And knowledge of law, To the workers, For he said to men, Who were penniless, Hounded from job to job, By crooked loan sharks, "The business men, Use the bankruptcy law, To give them a fresh start! And the law, Is the same, For you!" And he said to the I.W.W.s, Dreading another raid, On their once-raided hall, "Every man has the right to defend himself, And protect his home. Even by forces of arms! And the law, Is the same, For you!" Such was the great faith, On which he staked, All that he had learned about, That law, And justice, That were the same for all! For he was one, Of those old-time Americans, Born on a homestead, In North Dakota, Working his way up, Through college and law school, Taking and improving, A new homestead, For himself in Washington, Starting a little family, Keeping alive, The plain and sturdy traditions, Of our republic, And finding himself at last, On the prisoner's bench."

Herb : Yep, well that was him.

Helen : The next one's about Mike Sheean.

Herb : Mike Sheean. The only thing the only connection I had with him was that I scattered ashes on -

Tom : Could you tell me about that?

Herb : (laughs) Well I think I told you but I'll tell you about it as briefly as I can. His son was I think he was a lawyer or he had some training in investigating jurors which is done you know in most cases that way they investigate who are on the jury. And he worked with George Vanderveer in investigating jury at that time and of course it was a risky business because it was great hostility throughout the

whole Northwest. Anyway he when his father died here whether it was in Mike's will or whether it was his son Bill Sheean had decided anyway they wanted the ashes scattered on the Chehalis River. I think it is, whatever the name is, where Wesley Everest was hung from. And so the day came one Sunday morning we went down there, Clark Harry. Clark he would enjoy meeting you incidently Harry Clark and he is with one leg and he live in apartment houses he is retired and it would be very nice if he and I before you leave here would come up and see him because he don't get around very much you know on his one leg but anyway that's beside the point. He had that organized to go down there and he asked me to go along on that trip down to Centralia. The fellow that drove the car is a fellow by the name Harry Macky, Finnish fellow worker Amel Macky I think it was. Anyway we came down there it was a Sunday morning and we didn't know where the river was so we run into a man who liked a logger who had hangover. He looked kind of nervous and pale like he had a rough night Saturday night. So we asked where the place was at in Centralia and he said he would go along with us and show us the place, so we went down there. I had a box in my hand we never told him the occasion what we were down there what the conditions and circumstances what we were going down there, what we are going to do. So but he looked at that box in my hand there he look suspicious. I never paid no attention to it but he came down to the river he says, "I'll stay right here" he says. "I'll stay right here" he says. "Anything happens I don't see anything," "Well that's fine." We went out on the bridge and we opened the box and I didn't want to heave the box in the river. I wanted to do it kind of half graciously you know and I scattered Mike's ashes on the river and we came back and boy he was a little more relived but he still was nervous. He says, "If anything happened I didn't see anybody," he says. "I stayed right here and watched", he says. "I didn't see anybody."

Helen : What did he think it was, gunpowder?

Herb : Well of course that's what it was. It didn't dawn upon me before afterwards. He thought we had a bomb and was going to blow up the bridge!

Tom : What year was that?

Herb : Oh I'm not so sure what it was. Now that was let me see, goddamnit that was in the thirties yeah the Depression was on but that was before I dropped out.

Tom : When did you leave the I. W. W.?

Herb : In '37.

Tom : And why did you leave?

Herb : Oh that's a more or less too long to go into. That would bring in other people and I don't think it's quite important.

Tom : Between the time that you last saw Elmer Smith and your activities, were you involved in any other strikes with the I. W. W.?

Herb : No. I didn't have directly but I collected money. I collected money I collected on every occasion when there was anything there. I had so many collections going that I became ashamed of myself and I was afraid that people would cross the street when they saw me coming!

Tom : When did you rejoin the I. W. W.?

Herb : I think it was in '67.

Tom : Why did you rejoin?

Herb : Well that's you know it's pretty hard to read your subconscious mind you don't know your own mind sometime but the obvious reason what I felt was the major reason was that there was that war going, that goddamned war going and they were taking young people out of the country and taking them out there to murder and destroy people that had done them no harm and of course they have been butchered too. So I didn't feel like

I belonged to some of the others there. I wasn't among them. I was getting older and I didn't see nothing gained by throwing sacks of crap and urine on the policemen or cracking the window. It may have it's place but I couldn't see it that way, it didn't appeal to me. Well I felt I had to do something. I had to stand up and be counted. I had to make a protest and I feel well if anything is going to change that system it got to be an organization of workers. You got to have a power base and the I.W.O. is not organizing just to elect some politician they still have the basic philosophy of organizing at the point of production. You got to have a power base and the power base is industry. You have only two; the military action and of course you have the economic control through the private ownership and so on. But basically the raw power is expressed either in economic action (he slams his fist on the table) direct action in industry. Hit the boss in the pocketbook as the Tobblies used to say. Put the boss in overalls. But I don't know about that though. I don't know how much good that would do, I mean as putting them in overalls but that was one of the slogans. Either that or else your brute military power, one of the two. So I figure well I may never see it so long as I live but I want to belong. I want to belong to something before the old man come and hit me in the face with a spade. I want to be part of something. So I rejoined again course during that time I had always been defending the I.W.O.. I had sent in up in Alaska I sent in a five or a ten spot sometime for a paper you know or things like that and I had subscribed to the paper. I never had a feeling of hostility against the organization but there was something that happened you see there was I wanted to take action to put it roughly without using any names. I wanted to take action on a certain fellow, not to expel him but I wanted that he be reprimanded for what he did. And the fellows that know him and they were friends of mine too they said, "Oh well what's the use Herb. You know who he is it won't do any good." And they wouldn't support the action.

what I wanted to take and I just blo ed on. See that was during the crises when the A.F.L. was taking over was getting control in the lumber industry there we were not strong enough to resist and of course they got the inside track with the employers you see and of course the opposition and we were kind of in the doldrums at the time but we still. I was over at Kalamath Falls in the southeastern corner of Oregon and we built up an organization there, we had a hall and we had quite a membership and I wrote here and I wanted to get some help. There were delegates then in town here I know some young fellows and I asked them to come over there. And they probably would have come but this fellow I'm talking to he went around and talked to these fellows and said, "Oh don't pay no attention to Edwards. Here is the place to stop them." And he even advocated when the A.F. of L. had a strike that we wouldn't pay any attention to the strike that amounts to scabing and so on. And he talked those fellows out of coming over to help and we figured if we could have one corner we could get a hold on maybe I was wrong. I probably was an act of desperation. We couldn't hold it anyway. The tide was turning against us at that time and you see the New Deal had madē it easy for the A.F. of L. C.I.O. to organize and we didn't take the advantage of it. They were flocking to their standard and some of them more liberal employers then put up a fight against it to see well it's better than to have the I.W.O. that everybody is leaders. You can't make any deal there is nobody to buy out, there is no sweet heart contract, there is nobody you can deal with in the back door you got to deal with the whole membership and those people are impossible to deal with you know from the employers point of view. When you can't have some leaders you can't get into a cocktail bar someplace and make a deal with him or meet him in his office and so on and so forth you see that was the employers point of view and that was practiced throughout all industry across this continent and we know all that. They advocated the philosophy that labor and capital

are brothers in industry. They are partners in industry and what is good for one is good for the other. Well, hell of course here we come along with a different philosophy altogether and so on and we show also the conditions that exist when there was no organization at all, where working people lived like cattle and had no rights at all, economic, political or otherwise because the establishment, the employers managed to control the voting, the election at that time. And so it was hard to get any reform any law that was favorable to labor. And even if they did it wasn't enforced. In Colorado for instance they had the eight hour day through political action but it was not enforced and here we had the laws. We voted for the eight hour day in 1914 before I was a citizen even and of course I don't know whether it lost or it was declared unconstitutional I think they lost because there was a united effort on the part of employers to fight it and show how ridiculous it was for a man to work only eight hours. What the hell was he going to do with all his spare time he would be useless and of course that was a terrible ordeal for a working man (laughs) to work only eight hours. It would ruin him for life you know so you see that's what were're up against. Well of course to make a long story still longer (laughs), but we didn't have much of a chance but still I didn't want to give up. I thought if we could just get a unit together. If we could have a solid a good bunch of fellows you see and we use that flying squad method you know we went for a couple years there we had a covered wagon with our equipment you know and we went around like a bunch of gypies you know, stop at jobs and at evening we call them out on stump meeting and give them a talk and of course I don't know how it had sounded but I got confidence in myself so I can get up and lay down the (laughs) I guess my loud talk was more impressive probably than what I said.

Tom : Do you remember what years that was?

Herb : Well those in the '34 and '35 and I was also active in '36.

Well in '37 I went out of the woods. I kind of slowed down then because there was after it wasn't right away when I quit it was after nearly a year afterwards you know that was brewing in my mind. See I didn't want to go out in the woods for the C.I.O., A.F.L. when I had been a member of the I.W.O.. I didn't want to meet these fellows in the woods where I had been out there distributing literature and talking about the benefit of joining the One Big Union of the I.W.O.. I hated to meet people on the job as a defeated and so course that's one of the reasons why I quit the woods too anyway that's my theory. And they didn't want to take no action and that burned me up you know I thought Jesus Christ what kind of a people are they when somebody is doing wrong we should let him know that it was wrong and he should be reprimanded for it. I didn't want to expell but I just wanted him to know. He was incidently one of the codefendants with me in Sacramento and the one who didn't show up when we were going to the prison. And maybe that was a smart thing to do because we didn't owe the state of California anything. In fact I had a letter when I got my, well that's another story you know Governor Olson you see those who applied for it we got a pardon. And his secretary wrote a letter and there was formal letter you know telling about that we had to behave ourselves this and that and so on. So god that burned me up and I wrote him a hot letter and I told him that I didn't owe that if there were any apologies to be made the state of California owed me a apology. I didn't owe them a goddamned thing. And of course he wrote me a nice letter afterwards and he said his colegiate encouraged me that I should continue in the state of mind what I had and this and that, kind of patted me on the back a little and I guess his collegiates was Governor Olson the one who had given those pardons. But anyway that's neither here nor there. Some of the members you know that conderned Thompson was for asking it that way, asking for pardon but we didn't have to support, all we had to do was just make it formal because he didn't have, whether

it was true or not but they claimed that they didn't have the right to do that without an application for it, I don't know whether it is true or not. But anyway the fellow by the name of what the hell is his name, he's run for Congress or Senate down there. He didn't make it but he became a judge, a Supreme Court judge in California that fellow that was his secretary at the time. You remember how Ivan used to like me to have that read he wanted to read that long winded as everything else and it isn't well put together. It's kind of rambling and guess I have it down there.

Tom : Did you think that Elmer's family life was very happy?

Herb : That is something I can not pass any judgement on. I heard rumors that she was not too happy about it, that she still had a part of that background that law and order background of respectability and Elmer was throwing his life away. If they were not guilty of anything they still were more or less according to the philosophy of status quo more or less the outcasts of society you know the near-do-wells and if they had had the right opinion they could have had a shoe store or a bootlegging joint or a tavern or some kind of a business picking the pockets of the public you know putting it brutally but of course not on that way. They wouldn't have had it. But you know they'll say well the people didn't know they don't associate they're pretty nice people some of them go to church and they smile when they shake hands and they are friendly and sociable and here is these goddamned malcontents that isn't satisfied with anything. If they live in a bunkhouse without a floor they want floor in it. You put in a floor and they are not satisfied with that! If you do away with the double decked bunks and put in single bunks they are not satisfied with that. If the chuck is poor and make it a little bit better they are not satisfied. What can you do with those people? They are never satisfied, never satisfied! So you see and here we are doing the best we can for them and all that. Now of course I am not answering

your question but I figured that that is a powerful argument a powerful influence and how in hell can you get away. It's normal. Maybe under certain conditions I would have been the same way myself you see. I'm not conderⁿing. We are all product of environment of circumstances to a large degree. We can't get away from it.

Tom : Here, you might be interested. This is a letter from Elmer to his mother and father and he mentions your name in it.

Herb : Oh. (He reads) "My dear mother dad and all the rest", (that's a good letter.) "I have just received mother's letter and was surely glad to get it. It was waiting for me on my return this morning from Eureka where I had a little conflict with the American Legion. The front pages of the Eureka papers have been filled with (you may say that!) it for the last two days. (Well can you feature that, that's quite interesting.) Will send you a copy of the Frisco paper in that connection. I was in jail a full day and a night. There I had lots of time to think and my mind went back to all the dear folks at home. I have been terribly lonely for you all especially mother and dad. I saw Singletary and his wife and they wish to be remembered to you." (Singletary was from a place close to Eureka. I guess he isn't alive there.)

Tom : What was he doing there?

Herb : I think Singletary, he was the mayor of that little town. There's a coal mining town for awhile now it may be dead. And he had a brother that worked for the railroad. And Singletary was in the other car when we was going down and we were stopped by the American Legion. But they let Singletary go back you know. But my name had been in the papers a trial there you know what they wanted to call a fluke trial but it was something went wrong. I didn't get convicted so it was a mistake. Justice made a mistake there because I was not convicted so naturely I was singled out there, well anyway. "Singletary was chairman of that meeting

(that's true) and I was sorry that he was dragged into the trouble. They put him on the train at Scotia (well isn't that good, yeah that's exactly!). They put him on the train at Scotia after hauling him imprisoned in the American Legion hall (yeah I guess he was there for awhile) with myself and a fellow by the name of Edwards. (!) He is just fine (he means Singletary) and the little trouble has enabled us to get out more publicity in connection with the Centralia case and the criminal syndicalism law than we would have gotten in a year with our papers. I do hope you are all well and happy and you mother and dad simply must get off for a vacation to us in the spring. And I think I will go along. In fact I do not see why we all cannot go up there for at least three weeks this summer. The actual trial at my first case starts here next Monday in Sacramento (that was the case). I am enjoying my fight here and I believe I am doing considerable good. What do you think of the Call? (that was the paper in Frisco you see and Fremont Older, you run into his name, the famous editor. Probably the most famous editor in America at one time, Fremont Older in San Francisco and he was editor and I think he was good. He sent a photographer and a reporter down there and took us, we practically could have said anything. I don't think I had much to express I tried to tell him what took place.) It's fine don't you think if we can just keep it going. I wish I could just spend a few hours with you but that is out of the question now. I expect to be home about the fifteenth of April but will perhaps have to come back for a case which starts the sixth of June at Los Angeles. Love to you all, Elmer." Well that's telling it as it was.

Helen : Where does it mention his wife's name, I must have missed that?

Herb : He doesn't say a word about that.

Helen : Oh I thought you said it mention her name?

Herb : No. Well they got along but as I said, I'm not qualified and

wouldn't pass any judgement on that. Probably I wouldn't even if I know but I don't know. All I heard was rumor that it wasn't too. I could tell a little incident that was told to me by the one who told me that a certain woman I know in San Francisco Elmer became quite interested in her for a short time and -

Helen : Don't put that in your writing for crying out loud!

Herb : No, no. Anybody can be interested and nothing need to a -

Helen : I know what your interests are, don't tell me. I've never heard such nonsense.

Herb : I may be interested in the Queen of England but still I have never met her or even shook hands with her.

Helen : You're exaggerating horribly. You're not a boy for platonic friendships let's face it.

Herb : Oh but lonely, yeah I've had lots of platonic friendships, about the only friendships I've had but that's neither here nor there.

Helen : Your lines must be crossed about that platonic means. (pause) Would anybody like a dish of ice cream?

Herb : Well, I think so.

Tom : I'm sure you've seen this. This is the new edition of - (I show him a copy of The Centralia Conspiracy by Ralph Chaplin.)

Herb : Yeah and I think I have one.

Tom : And it mentions your name in the introduction. I don't know if you saw that.

Herb : Oh yes it does. Eugene (author of the introduction) you know is a kind of romantic fellow you know and he put a lot of stock in that. Of course you know I'm normal enough I'd rather have them then call me a dirty yellow son of a bitch but as far as the lubrication of the ego is concerned I know how that is a lot of fellows circumstances made them what they were. There were all kinds of people who never got their

name into anything and they were loyal. They were trustworthy and they went places and they were dependable and good. That case in Turck you see give me a lot of publicity and when we had the election after that you see when I was a candidate for the general organization committee in the industrial union, the organizational committee was the same as the general executive board for the whole general organization. And we had in the lumber during that time and of course I kind of lean on that although I don't claim that I had much to do with it but I happened to be down there at that time when we had the highest the peak of our membership in the Lumber-workers Industrial Union and we probably had nearly as much in that industrial union as all the rest of them put together which of course is neither here nor there. Any reason I got wasn't because when they get on the ballot they see my name and I had been in the papers you know and the publicity and the woman member that was freed by the jury and hugged and kissed to freedom and all that kind of bullshit you see which was a lie anyway. So that way I got on that way and when the ballots were counted I was still in the county jail in Sacramento and I would probably had been the chairman because the practice then the one who got highest vote became the chairman. They had a meeting we had money at that time.... (Conversation drifts into food and the tape ends.)