

Interview with Mrs. Julia Ruuttila  
journalist, 6830 N. Michigan Ave. Portland  
at the home of Edna Smith Nelson 803  
Park Dr. Gresham, Oregon September 7,  
1972 from 8-10:30 pm by Tom Copeland

Julia : When you go in terms of members of my family some of whom are still living whether I like them or not there may be things that I won't want to say on the tape. If you turn it off I will answer your questions.

Tom : Sure, well that's fine. I don't want you to feel pressured -

Julia : Because if you may have heard my father came here from Kentucky to pass for white.

Tom : I didn't know that.

Julia : Well he did. He had gotten himself into a northern university with a terrific effort. He was light skinned enough in a state which had very few blacks to pass for white. He later wrote to a school teacher that he had met in a Unitarian Sunday school class in this college town. He did not know that he had black blood. Came to Oregon with Miriam, that was my mother. Well my mother's dead. I always told her that someday I was going to write the story about my father and why he left Kentucky because when he went back there after - the only job he could get was picking worms off tobacco leaves so he came to Oregon to pass for white. But one by one he brought all of his lighter skinned relatives to Oregon and some of them are still living. It's been many years since I ceased if I ever did pass for white because I'm sure I always knew this because it was no surprise to me when he thought he was dying when I was about fourteen and he called me in and told my brother and myself that we were not white. It didn't make any impression on me at all because I guess I always knew it from the stories - He even brought his mother out though she was not nearly as light skinned as he. It must have been the stories she told me when I was a little girl. And anyway I was far more surprised when I was told I had some

Welsh blood than I was when I was told that. But my brother who was three years younger was quite horrified. He's still passing. He works for that horrible man Werner Von Braua in Huntsville. He's an engineer with thirty-seven scientists under him and he passes for white in Huntsville, Alabama. I have nothing to do with him but I do have in Oregon, two cousins one of whom I'm extremely fond of and I don't know whether she knows this family story or not. I know that my other cousin doesn't.

Tom : "hat was your father like?

Julia : He was five feet eight inches tall and that's not very tall. He had extremely broad shoulders. He was as strong as a bull or a mountain lion. I've seen him lift up one end of a car. He was extremely fearless until he got sort of beaten down by life. I think he regretted that he left the South and I think that's why he became so adsorbed in the I.W.W.. You see he had a master's degree in mathematics and he also had a degree in civil engineering and when he came to Oregon he thought he was going to be able to use these degrees but when they sent for his papers they had written "Negro" across them. So he had to start as a common laborer on the Southern Pacific but he's the man that designed and supervised the building of the first railroad bridges through Sisters.

Tom : And he was a member of the I.W.W.?

Julia : Yes. And then the man that was taking the credit for all of his work since he couldn't show his degrees and papers apparently was afraid that some of this was going to come out that my father had done all this work instead of him so he fired him. Then my father went to work out of Eugene in a logging camp. And it was in that logging camp that I was born. My parents had been married for about three years and it was in that logging camp that he began to look around him at some of the other of the loggers. During this period he had built a house by himself for my mother and me and my brother when he came along a few years later in Eugene. And my mother had become interested in the Socialist

Party in Eugene. There were many Germans there, a lot of them were "parlor Socialists", my father called them "parlor pinks". So that there was a large construction workers local at the I.W.W. in Eugene and it was when they were building the railroad from Eugene to Coos Bay and it was this local was headquartered in Eugene. So my father must have joined the I.W.W. in about 1908 I should imagine. He was an original thinker. He had been given some kind of a scholarship to an Eastern university where he devised an original method of weighing the earth. I remember he told me this when I was a little girl and he said it weighed four quaddrillion tons. Is that right?

Tom : I don't know.

Julia : Well anyway I remember that's what he said. He also was a melancholic depressive. It's easy to understand why. And sometimes <sup>for months at a time</sup> he couldn't drive himself to ask what he called "the master class" for a job. So he used to sit at home and as he was not a lazy man he had to keep up the pretense that he was ill. He would retreat into illness and he would read. He also would sit my brother and I, had a little workshop in our yard, and he'd sit us on one end of his workbench and he'd lecture about things, the theory of light and different parts of the family before the Christian era and ancient history and economics. I got a very good education before I was twelve. He was an extremely brilliant man and an unusual thinker. But then when I think about my father I think about the way that he was. He committed suicide, that's how he died. I think about him the way he was when I was in my teens and I think to myself that it was my mother who was the strong woman because her people had come to New England, well according to a book she has they came in 1638. She was brought up on her grandfather's farm that had hundreds and hundreds of acres and he had white serfs living in cabins in the hilly part of the farm, boarded on the Ohio River. They had their own steamboat landing, their own school for his children and such of his grandchildren that were living around there with several more of his children. And they had a store in which

they had things for the people that worked for them, they were nothing but serfs my father told me once and you can see that's true. They could come there and get bacon and calico and that sort of thing and they could eat even when there was no farm work to do. My mother was brought up in that background. She went to Maryville High School and in high school she had Latin, Greek and four years of German. Can you imagine that in high school? She had plain and solid geometry, trigonometry, calculus botany you name it, she had it. And in a way she did her own thinking too because her grandfather is a Republican. She became a Democrat over the tariff which she tried to convince her grandfather, screamed at her she told me that the tariff was wrong. I believed they were Baptists anyway she said their religion was fundamentalist and she became a Unitarian and a believer in the Single Tax. And she did all these things absolutely on her own. She started to teach in a Marietta school when she was eighteen. Seems funny to teach right out of high school but of course she didn't have an ordinary high school education. And she went to the first high school class in Marietta that admitted women. She taught in the first and second grades and after she taught for a few years she was an old maid when she married my father. She asked to be transferred to a slum school and in the slum school she learned that there was a connection between what you had for breakfast and how much you can learn. So she was a very unusual woman.. And in Oregon she became a Socialist.

Tom : What kind of activities did your parents have with the labor, radical movement?

Julia : Well, my mother went to Socialist meetings and my father went with her though he used to pick them apart afterwards. They use to take me and my brother used to be layed out on a bench. He fell asleep but I always sat up front and listened to what people said. I've heard all of the speakers because they always stayed to our house. Eugene was a sort of a waypoint. I heard Debs, a man named Kirtpatrick that wrote War What For?, a woman named Agnes Deporter who was in the I.W.W. and Big Bill Haywood and oh

many of them (she added Elizabeth Gurley Flynn later). Some of them later became Communists.

Tom : What kind of things did your father do with the I.W.W.?

Julia : Well he worked in logging camps, he built the railroads by which they bring the logs down to the sawmill camps. One time he set himself up to build houses in Eugene with another man who had been an I.W.W.. This was after the construction workers local moved out of Eugene. Some of those houses are still standing. When I was back there two or three years ago and went and saw some of them they were well built.

Tom : Was he ever involved in any strikes?

Julia : Yes he went to Eastern Oregon to the short logs one time to start a strike in a place called Austin. It was owned by Mormans. The employers of the lumber company were Mormans which is probably why I am so prejudiced against them. He'd gone over there with two other agitators and he was I suppose the dangerous one of the trio, the persuasive one, so they put strickine - Did they put it in his coffee or in the salad, potatoe salad, anyway he almost died and these other two men had to alk him up and down all night, I remember that. And then it was during World War I he went to Fort Lewis as a carpenter. They had a strike up there which he lead and they were building the barricks for the troops to live in while they were being trained, the construction workers all went on strike and he was run out of there. And then to a place called Wendland, a Wobbly camp out of Eugene. Let's see was that before or after he went to Aberdeen to work in the shipyards? And they had a strike there. What time did they have that general strike in Seattle?

Tom : 1919.

Julia : Well they had a sympathy strike in Grays Harbor Motor Company in Aberdeen. He was involved in that strike but before it got to the point where they went on strike as he had evidently been agitating for the men to go out the boss came around and accused him of being a "boleshivk". That's what they called them in those

days instead of a Communist. And he said, "oh no" I remember him telling this to me. I was eleven years old. He said, "oh no, I'm a Zapatist." And this man didn't know who Zapata was. And then I remember in that strike it was the first strike I really remember because the strike the construction workers had at Florence when we lived in Eugene when they brought the construction of the Southern Pacific spur line here down the coast to a halt. The governor sent troops down there and they marched all those I.W.W. back all that way from Florence to Eugene. I think I still have a letter that my mother wrote to the paper berating the governor and saying how they were marched back all those miles of track that they'd already laid and all the food they had was some bread and it was moldy. She was still writing letters when she died at the age of ninety-eight to the Oregonian on subjects that she felt strongly about. She was a very strong willed woman.

Tom : What was your involvement then as you were growing up with the labor movement?

Julia : Well as I was growing up all these people were constantly staying at our house and when we went on the stump farm they came out just out from prison or to keep from being sent to prison or to keep from being drafted, hide out from the draft in World War I. The I.W.W. opposed the draft. I remember a bunch of farmers in that valley with ropes and came to lynch my father. I was quite small then, that's before we went to Aberdeen, I believe. My father had built our house back on a hill in a grove of oak trees and we could see this crowd of men coming up to the field. I remembered my mother fainted. My brother was so little he was just playing with his blocks. He didn't know what was going on. But believe me I knew and I was determined, I was not going to be - that's the last time I'd ever been afraid. I was determined that they were not going to kill me. My father rolled up his sleeves and went down and stood on the stile over the fence around our huge yard and he stood there confronting those men. But I thought he would be killed and then they would come and kill us.

My mother slithered down in a faint. So I went out the back door and went into the hills and I stayed there for about three days. And when I was driven back by hunger not knowing that my family was dead and they were all alive. You know what my father did? He said to me in a very soft voice, he had a soft southern voice, he said, "Did you stop to think about leaving your mother?" I said, "Well I thought she'd died." Cause you know it was the first time I had ever seen anyone faint. He said, "Well what about your little brother?" I said, "Oh, I didn't care about him." But I just cared about myself you see. So he made me write that thing on Shakespeare, "A coward dies many times before his death, the valiant only tastes of death but once." I believe it was three hundred times I had to write that. He was the sort of person that when he spoke to you and he was displeased you couldn't bear it.

Tom : Were you ever a member of the I.W.W.?

Julia : Yes.

Tom : When did you join?

Julia : I joined in Centralia after meeting Elmer Smith. And it was nothing but a sentimental gesture. I paid my dues possibly for for six months. Because after going around to Tacoma and Seattle I could see that what my father had told me was so, that the situation in Centralia was an exception, that was where the only vitality that was left in the I.W.W. was there. But Seattle which had been very important place in the I.W.W. movement and Tacoma was even worse.

Tom : Well what was it about Elmer that made you feel different?

Julia : Well because he was the whole hub of where the vitality was in the working class and in the I.W.W. was still like it used to be in Centralia.

Tom : What kind of contact did you have with him after that?

Julia : I think I probably exchanged a few letters with him but that's

all. I never saw him again. But as I told you during the many years that our headquarters were on that desolate farm, that stump farm, way up a creek a tributary of the middle part of the Williamite called Lost Creek. At Christmas my father used to take whatever money he had to buy money orders and have me write letters to these prisoners and that's during all those years I began writing to the prisoners in Walla Walla. And my father believed that Elmer Smith was a great man. In those days of course my father did all my thinking for me, you can easily see that, and in a sense has influenced I suppose all my thinking.

Tom : Do you remember what kind of things he said about Elmer?

Julia : Well you know that in Catholic homes people have certain types of pictures on the walls. In our home my father would say take a letter, if he'd had a letter from Elmer Smith and he would tack that up on the wall. So I was familiar with Elmer Smith's face from the pictures he'd cut out of the newspapers, the Seattle Union Record and the various I.W.W. papers, the International Socialist Review, Solidarity, the Industrial Worker. I was familiar with his face long before I ever met him and with the faces of those other men. And then on a Easter vacation from the University of Oregon when I was a freshman I went to Walla Walla. All the others were out by that time excepting Ray and I hitchiked to Walla Walla to visit Ray Becker. It's very funny what happened because, I'll never forget the visit or the door clanging shut.. but they were allowed to write I believe it was two letters a month, wasn't it?

Tom : Yes, it was in the files.

Julia : Yeah, something like that so he used to write these letters and he printed his letters. He had remarkable hand printing, very small hand printing. He used to write them in such a way that you could cut the sheet of paper apart. On those two sheets maybe he could write twenty letters to people. They would be



lined in such a way, you could cut it off here (gestures) and there'd be part of the letter to one person here and part on the back and up here at the top in very fine print would be the name of the person and their address. So I used to take these, cut them apart and forward these letters on to these people so that instead of writing just to me he could write to all these people. I was just sort of what you would call a mail drop. And I was very faithful about doing that type of thing because you know well I still believe although I understand the "obblies are having a come back but you notice they don't know what they are talking about, it's just nonsense. Have you met some of them?

Carol : Yes.

Julia : What do you think of them?

Carol : Well I know, I shouldn't mention names - Mike. I don't think too much of him.

Julia : No I don't either. But anyway the I.W.W. preamble I still know by heart and I suppose it's the main economic commitment of my life. I still think it's as true as it ever was. "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." It's sure true. Well anyway he must have got the idea I was considerably smarter than I was because pretty soon he began writing to me about directions as he was pursuing his efforts to get out. He had started to study law and he wrote one petition or some sort of a court proceeding himself and it was many pages long. Isn't there something in the files about it? He began writing directions to me to do things for him about his case that were completely over my head. They were absolutely beyond my ability to grasp or to carry out. Besides I was young and extremely selfish and self centered like very many young people are. I think Carol's quite an exception.

Edna : I think Tom's quite an exception.

Carol : I think there are many exceptions.

Julia : Are you sure? He doesn't seem to me to be all that young. How

old are you?

Tom : Twenty-two.

Julia : Is that all you are? You seem much older. I don't mean that you look older but you seem older. I guessed that you were probably twenty-eight. You don't look that old but I just thought you were. But yet in looking back I have some sympathy for myself but for many years I was bitterly ashamed of it. Since I was utterly unable to grasp how to do these things or how to carry them out I just quit writing to him. So then he wrote to my mother. My father was still alive but I was always the one that had written the letters. He wrote a letter to her and he was grieving because I hadn't written to him. I had even gotten so disorganized thinking about all this weight of all these things hanging over my head I hadn't done that he wanted me to do that I even quit forwarding these little pieces out of his letters so that my mother had forwarded the last two that had come, cut them up and forwarded them. So I don't know what she replied to him but he stopped writing to me. Well now I forget to tell - I was still going to school at this time. At the end of this period I married a boomer switchman who had belonged to the I.W.W. by the name of Bertram. And I'm sure the only reason I married him was because I still had such a sentimental attachment to the I.W.W. that the fact that he flashed his red card at me one time I thought he must be wonderful. He was also quite good looking. So. The Depression came along about then and we went to live in the terrible sawmill town, Lincoln. The West Dragon Lumber Company mill in a three room company house that was made out of number bar common. You know what that is? They've got a different grading system now, had big knotholes in the wall. And then I had my one and only son. Well he was really born in Chicago but that's another story but he was a year old when I took him to live out there. It was a struggle to keep from starving to death. Went out and did housework and various sorts of things and then I decided to

write my way out of this purgatory so I started writing True Stories. Well I got a check for this stupid True Story for a hundred and seventy-nine dollars I believe it was. And that was a huge fortune and I was coming back from the post office, where we got our mail in a box and I picked up a newspaper and in there was a picture of Ray Becker and Irvine Godman. He had gone to Walla Walla and had started this, and you know Irv was very publicity conscious. He'd given his story to the papers. He had Ray out of prison and had started this court proceeding. So as much as I know and I knew a very great deal about the defense work from all the people who had been in prison that stayed in our house when I was a child, I knew money was needed. So I immediately went back to the post office and bought a money order and scribbled a note to this attorney whom I had never met before who lived in Portland, Irvine Godman and sent a contribution to Mr. Becker's defense. So he began to write to me again and by this time I knew quite a bit, really my wits had been sharpened. I had been to the university of hard knock. So I proceeded to start to carry out the things. He seemed to have completely overlook the fact that I had let him down so badly when I was young and I proceeded to carry them out. So it was during this period also that my husband and I were among three or four people that were very instrumental in organizing that mill into the Federal Union of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers. And an idea began to form in my mind course by this time I had learned how to think something that I couldn't do before and my father was dead and I had to do my own thinking and that always helps of getting him out of prison. Because many of the people in the union, the loggers, were old I.W.W.'s and they were friends of my husband and mine and so a few of us met together and we decided that we think we could get this taken up in the big Portland local which was the biggest local in the wood workers union at that time. So I wrote up this resolution and it passed. And then I heard about this man who was an I.W.W. and who was an official in the state federation of labor, S. P. Stevens and a couple of us went to see him and he was ex-I.W.W.

and we conceived the idea of setting up the Free Ray Becker Committee and trying to get Ray Becker out. So we got one of those free rooms at the Portland Public Library and made up a list of the people around town, the liberals you know those people that have got money. And we thought we needed just the right person for chairman so we had my mother. And that's when the Free Ray Becker Committee was formed. Well then shortly after that the Federation of Woodworkers was formed and by that time the loggers had carried the word that we were going to get Ray Becker out so the Federation of Woodworkers, I think it's in there (the Oregon Historical Society) ~~and~~ the resolution they passed and Mr. Weber the treasurer of the federation was drafted as treasurer of this committee. And if you look at the letterhead, isn't there a letterhead of the Free Ray Becker Committee in there? You notice there were teachers and ministers.

Tom : Can you say something about the kind of correspondence that passed between Ray and different other attorneys and people on the outside?

Julia : Well among the attorneys that, as I say he had fired Irvine Godman before we got the committee set up so the first several meetings of the committee we felt it was perfectly valid to have Mr. Godman come to the meetings to give us a little help which he was big hearted enough to do. And then let's see, we hired a young attorney named Clifford J. O'Brien, he's still in Portland, he's pretty far gone he was alcoholic but you might try talking to him. By this time the loggers had begun to, we had a whole bunch of Free Ray Becker buttons made and we sold them at logging camps and union meetings and down at the Portland labor school, Portland labor center. We started soliciting money and sending speakers to different union meetings and places and raising money. So we hired Clifford J. O'Brien. We had a number of attorneys on the committee including Henry Miner Esterly who had defended the I.W.W. during the Palmer Raids I believe it was. Everybody had suggested we should hire Cliff as he was an

upcoming energetic young attorney and we paid him what seemed to me I don't remember how much it was , a large sum of money to write up this brief that we were going to take the case to court. Now then we had a slightly different idea from Ray about the way we were going to get him out. We intended, our first plan to get him out was publicity. Well we never did give up on that one but he thought we were going to get him out through a court action so we had to go ahead in a perfectly sincere way with the court action. But Clifford O'Brien never wrote this petition and after awhile, he said he was working on it. It was really awful what Cliff did. So one of the other attorneys who was in the same law firm by the name of Harry Kenin he finally forced Cliff, He practically locked Cliff up in his office and forced him to write this thing up. So he produced this petition. He filed some preliminary papers. There was a deadline for getting the petition in and I remember that several members of the committee including myself were up in his law office stapling all these copies together, remember that and numbering the pages. Well Ray was quite pleased with this petition, it was really quite a document because he was a brilliant young attorney even if he was a procrastinator. We also had to give him some more money because he had spent all the money we had already given him. We had to give him a little more which we thought was dreadful. Then to further our various efforts we had started to get all these affidavits. Well the first affidavits we had gotten you know they're around Centralia then when I finally succeeded in tracing Tom Morgan he was living down at Eureka. So I went down there and got that affidavit from him. And all that time Ray would be corresponding back and forth about this stuff that was in Elmer's files and he'd want more and more of these affidavits. So I remember we sent Cliff to get one. We sent him down to someplace in northern California to get an affidavit from one of the men that was in the lynch car that took Wesley Everest out to the bridge and lynched him. He got it too and he named the other

people that were in the car. Isn't it in that file? Did you see it? I can't remember that guy's name now. But I do remember and I'll never forget when he got back with his expense account that two loggers almost had a conniption fit because he'd sent his suit to a cleaners while he was gone on this trip and he had this on his expense account and they were just furious. Oh they watched that money like hawks! And another time I remember Mr. Stevens made a trip over to Walla Walla and apparently he got very tired out and decided to buy a bottle of whiskey and he tried to put that on the expense account and I thought they were going to can him off of the committee.

Tom : What did Ray think of Elmer Smith?

Julia : Well by the time that we had set up the committee and before that according to the stuff that was in the files he decided that Elmer Smith, just like you said, that he was interested only in furthering his own career which was absolutely untrue.

Tom : What makes you say it was untrue?

Julia : Well in the first place he had devoted the major portion of his lifetime to this case and various efforts (man walks in and I shut off the tape) I've said it publically in many meetings including the longshoreman's union when they were discriminating against blacks and they were lily white.

Tom : Do you know anything about the kind of pressures that Elmer went through all these years?

Julia : Yes. I know that he must have had a very difficult time after he was disbarred and before that and earning a living for his family. And I know that he devoted his energy and time to going to meetings and trying to solve the problems of the families of those men. He would try various means of facilitation their release and pushing the work of the Centralia Defense Committee to get them out. And getting them out on parole. That was another cause of contention within the prison because Ray Becker refused to have anything to do with the idea of parole.

I don't know what McInerney position was on this subject. Have you come across anything about that? He's the one that died in prison. And I know that Elmer Smith had difficulty with his wife because I know that she, from things that members of the I.W.W. said, that she must have been very unhappy of that type of life. It must have been, well being the wife of a man who was dedicated to a cause it's difficult for any woman unless she was extremely unusual herself. And I don't believe that she was that unusual. And then as I told you over the telephone I know that among the various members of the I.W.W. that tried to raise money to fund the various efforts to get the men out there was this member of the branch in Seattle who was a singer and sang at benefits to raise money and she became quite interested in him because they had musical instruments. And that must have been, if Elmer knew about it, a source of grief to him. And then I know he must have been, when he lost the election in Lewis County which, I don't know if there is any documentary evidence that the ballots were thrown in the river but I certainly heard that and I heard that at the time it happened. It was common knowledge. And that must have been because he had believed that he could bring to justice the men that were out of prison and should be in prison instead of those who were there.

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

Julia : In Elmer Smith's family?

Tom : Un hun.

Julia : No I didn't meet Edna Smith until - I met some of the people in the Methodist Federation for Social Action including Mark Chamberlain and I think it must have been through that and then I heard that Elmer Smith's brother lived at Gresham. And I met Edna at some of the meetings when I came up I was living in Astoria and I came up to those meetings from Astoria and met Edna. I don't believe I ever met Elmer Smith's wife though on my way back from my journey to Tacoma and Seattle I stopped in

Centralia and went to his office. Oh I did see him again then on my way back. I went to his office and I went to the I.W.W. hall and I spent the whole day back and forth between the two places and one of the - this singer from Seattle and I've been trying to think of his name, better turn the tape off while I concentrate.

Tom : I wouldn't use it.

Julia : His first name was Hiney, I mean it was Henry but they called him Hiney, what was his last name? (pause) Well anyway he was there in the I.W.W. hall and he offered to give me a ride to Portland and he's the one that told me about this love affair which was an extremely outrageous thing for him to do considering that - (side one of tape one ends) (what was outrageous was that Julia was a young, unknown person that this man was telling such things to.)

It struck me that he was a very superficial person compared to Elmer Smith and I couldn't understand why Elmer's wife would be interested in him. But of course I suppose it was music don't you? Or her general discontent with life.

Tom : Well what was Elmer's office, what did that look like?

Julia : It was a very bare office with a roll top desk. But I don't in looking back although sometimes when you look back you can see quite vividly places and rooms where you have been. It's the people that were there that I remember not what was in the office except that it was a bare poorly furnished office, quite different for instance than Vanderveer's office many years later when I went to Seattle to talk to Vanderveer.

Tom : What did you remember about Elmer?

Julia : Well the thing that I remember about him is that. You see I always wanted to write fiction and therefore I've always been very, what's the word, interested in people and even when I was young I had some sort of an idea to get an impression or some sort of empathy with people about what they were really like.



It seemed to me that he was a person of great integrity, sincerity, gentleness, kindness. But the thing that struck me then and in looking back all these years I've thought about it, I've never seen anyone in my life that was so shadowed by sorrow or who was so sad and I've often wondered if that was really the way he was before this happened or if it was this thing that had put this - I mean by this time he must have known what a terrific struggle it was going to be to get those men out. And the I.W.W. was you see folding up on him and had split into two parts and by the time I got back from Seattle, I knew that I knew the I.W.W. was gone, young as I was I was no fool although I was young and ignorant. I could see it was gone and what else did he have to depend on? The woodworkers union had't been formed yet. Didn't get organized until 1935. Even the boomers' division of the woodworkers union didn't organize until 1933 so what did he have? Nothing.

Tom : What were the two sides in the split in the I.W.W.?

Julia : Well I presume that the Emergency program were those that still wanted to go ahead and do something and the Four Trays were the "spittoon philosophers". And as I recall the local in the branch they call it not local in Centralia was in the Four Trays. But you know I never concerned myself with the split in the I.W.W.. I knew nothing about it until I went to Portland and found out there was a split. By the time I had got back from Seattle I knew that the I.W.W. had gone down the drain.

Tom : Do you remember what year that was?

Julia : Well I was nineteen years old, eighteen or nineteen and I was born in 1907 so what year would that be?

Tom : Twenty-five. Could you compare a person like George Vanderveer and Elmer Smith?

Julia : Oh sure it's very simple.

Tom : What were the differences?

Julia : Vanderveer was a first class attorney that built up a reputation as an attorney for the downtrodden and the underdog and went on to exploit it and became the general council for Dave Beck in the Teamsters Union in Seattle. He made a good thing out of it. He was an intelligent man who was fond of steak and expensive whiskey and he looked it at the time I met him. But still if you read the transcript of that case you realize that he was a good attorney and that he put up an able defense. And why he didn't do some of the things that Ray Becker, and there was some validity in his criticism. It's been a long time since I read the transcript. It's been a long time since I found that dusty package in the basement of the courthouse where she worked. That was many years after she walked off the job that day and the secretary in the courthouse there was, she was to find out if there was an inquest into the death of Wesley Everest. And she told me there was some old papers that had been taken down in the basement and were wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. She went down and brought them up. And it was shorthand and she said she could read it and she offered to take it home and transcribe it and send it to me and she did. So you see there was quite a difference between the day when Edna had worked there and the day when this woman offered to do this for me and that must have been about 1936 when I was there and that happened.

Tom : How was Elmer then different from Vanderveer?

Julia : Well Vanderveer had on an expensive suit of clothes and Elmer Smith had on a ruffled suit and he gave the impression that he didn't have time to get himself pressed every day. I don't know if you can go too much on what I say about meeting him because you see those were the only two times that I saw him and as I recall I exchanged several letters with him after I went back to college. My father had given up writing to anybody because of his hands and I'm the one that did the writing.

All he ever did was sit in the evening and work out mathematical formula. My mother burned up two suitcases of old stuff. God

knows what was in them. I often wonder.

Tom : You say it was the work that Elmer did that finally you used to free Ray Becker?

Julia : Yes it was. Because in that after we had sorted out the material in there and put aside all these letters to Elmer from family members of those men and letters to Elmer from those men and letters to Elmer as the sparkplug in the Centralia Defense Committee from all the people around the country that were interested in it. After we put all that stuff aside we used the memoraddum and notes that he had about so and so living at such and such a place knows this about the case. And there would be a notation in his writing about what it was this person knew. Then there were lists of names of the lynchers and that's where and we went to see all these people and got statements from them.

Tom : I forget. What was the name of the man who had these papers?

Julia : His name was Davis I believe. He was quite different from Elmer Smith as far as I could make out he hadn't the slightest interest in Mr. Becker or in the Centralia case or in the working class. He was just puttering away there, a third rate attorney. Probably doing a little legal work to make a very poor living. And there were cobwebs in this box and that's why we had no hesitation when he went out to lunch in dragging this box out and putting it in Mr. Dikes truck and making off with it.

Tom : Did you ever meet a man named Connor Harmon? He married Elmer Smith's sister. He was in Centralia for awhile.

Julia : Well I remember the secretary of the local. I remember Elmer.

Tom : What was the secretary's name?

Julia : I showed you it. It was in one of those records. I think that was his name. I had some correspondence with him after I went back to school. I decided from the letters that he wrote to me that he also had lost a good deal of hope and I think he received probably a small salary as secretary and I got the

idea ~~that~~ that his committment wasn't the same as Elmer's committment. AS far as I know Elmer continued to work on that case until his death and I don't know whether there are any papers or documents extant that show what he thought about the letters that Becker wrote to him and about him or not but he probably understood just as I always understood.

Tom : Could you say something about the difference between the I.W.W. and the Communists?

Julia : Well now really I don't think that that's valid at this time. I told you about meeting this man in Portland and that he was one of the people that convinced me that the I.W.W. had outlived their usefullness. But whether I would have come to that conclusion just from talking to him or whether it was because I saw the I.W.W. was really over as an effective force in the working class and in freeing the prisoners who were still in prison at that time, I don't know. It was a combination. But I would like to make it plain that the great committment of my life was to the preamole of the I.W.W. and to the union which the members of the I.W.W. who had decided to organize the woods and the booms.

Tom : Did you know Anna Louise Strong?

Julia : Yes.

Tom : Can you tell me something about her? You see, let me show you. She wrote a poem about the Centralia defendants and she was in the courtroom during the trial and this is a poem about Elmer Smith that I got out of the University of Michigan library that she wrote. And I've read a couple of her books and was interested in her.

Julia : Yes she wrote a column for the Seattle Union Record under the name of "Anise". My mother and father were great admirers of her writings. And I will say one thing for the record. I think the Communist Party was off their rocker when they felt that she'd sold out which they did and was obviously not true. I argued with many of them on the subject and later I'm sure

that they decided they were wrong too about her.

Tom : What was she like?

Julia : She was a person that you couldn't really like because she was a very cold person on the surface and she was very impatient and very rude which I am both myself. She didn't like to be interrupted by trivialities. She was a person very unlike Edna Smith. She never spent any time on her hair or her costume. Edna's just the opposite. She always looks pretty sweet.

Edna : What a reputation for Edna!

Julia : She was a person if you went up to her after a meeting and you said as I did once and I've never forgotten how she cut me off. "My mother and father were great admirers of yours and we always read your articles in the Seattle Union Record." She said, "Oh I haven't got time for that kind of talk." But when I became older and more of an impatient reporter myself I fairly sympathized with her. But to anyone who had ever heard her speak or read as I did before the Seattle Union Record was suppressed you know it was suppressed. Or did you know that?

Tom : Yes.

Julia : It was quite obvious that she could never have done what she was accused of having done. And I understand she contributed some money or tried to contribute some money toward the defense of the first Smith Act victims and they sent it back and I always thought that was really too bad. I'll tell you someone that knew her quite well and disliked her thoroughly. Who's that woman that comes around every year and talks?

Edna : Maude Russell.

Julia : Maude Russell. Did you know that?

Tom : I didn't know that she felt that way about her but I know who Maude Russell is.

Edna : Maude Russell is in China right now.

Julia : Oh she is, how interesting!

Edna : She's not coming out this fall.

Julia : She's going to remain?

Edna : No no just different activities.

Julia : She won't be out this fall. Well there's no point in her coming out because we can get all kinds of direct information now.

Carol : But I always wanted to meet her.

Julia : (pause while she reads the poem by Anne Louise Strong about Elmer) Yeah, that didn't surprise me. I remember now she was the daughter of a judge. (long pause while she continues reading) Yes, that's Elmer Smith. That's an authentic and valid portrait of Elmer Smith. Do you know where she gets this line "the prisoners bench"? Do you know from what she got that?

Tom : No.

Julia : Have you heard of Arturo Giovanitta?

Tom : Um hum.

Julia : Well one of his poems was called "The Prisoners Bench". Shut that off for a minute and I'll see if I can remember the last few lines of it. (I shut off the tape) (she recites) "Through here all rests the tempestuous rays of light. Tatters of flesh and blood and ~~deeds~~ deeds of crime all passed here to their doom." And then it ends up - "Don't dust these boards on which our wretched brothers fell, for the millionaire revolting stench is not here. Neither preachers saintly smell and the judge never sat upon this bench." He wrote that to Joe Ettor who was one of those that they tried to frame with Giovanitta. I have his book Arrows in the Gale. And my father had one of those books and he used to read those poems to me and I sent my copy which I fell heir to after my father's death, Arrows in the Gale

to Ray Becker and the warden confiscated it so he never got it. But later a friend of mine in the longshore union the later Francis J. Murmane and you may want to look in his file at the Historical Society. His papers are there and I understand just yesterday from Matt Corne that they have been completely indexed. So you may find some material in there that would be of use to you. Later he made the rounds of various second hand bookstores here and in New York and in San Francisco and in one of those second hand bookstores he found me another copy so I have it. When the Black Panther leader Kent Ford was acquitted he was tried here for on a charge of inciting a riot and when I was waiting for the verdict in his case in the courtroom I wrote out the last two stanzas of "The Prisoners Bench" and gave them to the woman who is now his wife. You know I was brought up to believe that you should expect, if you didn't sell out your ideas, you should expect under our economic system to spend some time in jail. And I'm quite surprised at the age of almost sixty-six that I have never been sent to prison.

Tom : Do you ever regret - ?

Julia : No going to prison? No I think there enough people in prison now. And I have worked on so many defense committees that I made up my mind many years ago that if I were ever framed for something I was going to plead those Latin words, n-o-l-e-c-o-n-t-e-n-d-r-e and not waste anyone's time attempting to build up a defense for me because there are cases that you have to fight such as Angel Davis' case and the Centralia case in that time and the cases of some of the Black Panther leaders that they were attempting to frame and railroad. I made up my mind long long ago that no one was going to waste one minute of their time on me and I've always thought I could manage very nicely in prison. Because I can recite poetry to myself for five or six hours without ever repeating a single line. I've

always wanted to write poetry. I've written some and I could as long as I had paper and pencil I could occupy myself quite happily and get a lot of much needed rest. But some people find it very difficult to be in prison and of course I've never been there so maybe I just think that I could do my time. Course I don't know what I'd do for asthma pills, I can't breathe without them. But as long as I had some pens, a ruler and a shorthand notebook and some asthma pills I'd get along all right. The worst thing would be not getting to take a shower bath everyday and that is something that is very sad about what happens to people in prisons. As I say all of these people I was brought up they were the heroes of my childhood and my youth and I've always thought the fortunate ones were those died in prison, who didn't have to come out and spend the rest of their life trying to live up to their legends. Ray Becker had spent most of his adult life, he was twenty three when he went in, he spent twenty years in jail and prison and during a greater portion of that time he was occupied with getting himself out on an unconditional release. Well he didn't get out on an unconditional release. He got his sentence commuted for time served which you probably saw in the files and suddenly he was like a man who's lost his occupation.

Tom : When did he die?

Julia : He died in Portland apparently of a heart seizure. He was found dead in the yard of a log cabin that he had bought on the outskirts of Portland. When he was released he was met at the gates by a minister called Fred Shorter and a woman from the ACLU in Seattle. And he didn't like either one of these people. He had fallen out with the ACLU and with the head of the ACLU in New York and had fallen out with Mr. Shorter and I presume was extremely angry at being put out on a commutation of sentence but he couldn't get back in. So he had to do the best he could and go out and get on the train with them. And they accompanied him to the Union Station in Portland. He was



Julia 25

was met their by the heads of the committee, a <sup>4</sup>l<sup>r</sup>ge number of loggers from the I.W.A. hiring hall which is on Sixth Street. You know Sixth Street is right on the way down to the Union Station and the woodworkers, the loggers hiring hall was just about three blocks from Union Station. And this was on a Saturday, and that afternoon there was a meeting of the Portland Woodworker's local which was the local that was most the involved in his defense. So a great many people were at the Union Station to meet him and we were very cold to these two people, Reverend Shorter and this woman I forget her name, do you know it? Because they didn't get off the train. I don't believe we even thanked them for accompanying him. It was our belief that an arrangement had been made with the governor because some of the people that had helped to railroad these men to prison were still involved in the political life of southwestern Washington and still resident in Centralia and they wanted to be sure, that was our feeling, that they wanted to be sure Mr. Becker got off at the Union Station and didn't in some way or other continue up to Centralia because they evidently thought he was a mad dog that would go up there and kill all these people. And actually he was a very gentle person. It was just ridiculous for them to have thought that. I think he had planned to sue the state of Washington for false imprisonment from all those dreadful years he spent locked up. But anyway there we all are this vast crowd of loggers and other persons that met him and we were all on our way up Sixth Avenue to the loggers hiring hall when suddenly the traffic, you can imagine the differences that had happened in twenty years, got to him. And I'll always remember that as one of the saddest things I've ever seen. He turned and fled like a deer down an alley away from the traffic and the noises of the traffic. It was terrifying for him. But some of the loggers went after him and brought him back and took him in triumph into the loggers hiring hall. And I forget where we had lunch, it completely

Julia 26

escapes me we must have eaten someplace. Then we all went over to the meeting of the Portland woodworkers local International Woodworkers of America we were then. All the big mills were in Portland then and this was a huge local and it was jammed and packed with people. And for several years a huge enlarged portrait of Ray Becker that was made from the picture that was in the Oregonian at the time that the attorney Irvine Godman got him out to the court proceeding in Spokane. We'd had a huge enlargement made of that, just Ray Becker not Mr. Godman and that had hung on the office of the lumber and sawmill workers union which became the I.W.A. local in Portland. So as we were coming into the hall, the huge hall with a couple thousand men in it, the people that were on the platform, the officers of the local recognized that they knew that we were meeting the train and expected Ray Becker to come there and they recognized him as we were bringing him down the aisle. The president of the local, trying to think what his name was now because I hold an honorary lifetime membership in that union, banged the gavel down and said, "Fellow worker Becker is here", not comrade Becker, but "Fellow worker Becker is here." And the men all turned around (she gestures) and saw him coming up the aisle. And it's quite a sight when you see men with sun-burned, the loggers were all down from the camps, with sun-burned grissled faces, weep, weep. That many of them wept that day (her voice breaks). Well he made a number of meetings. He tried to do his duty by those who had gotten him out. He went to St. Johns and he went to a meeting of the plywood local with which Francis Murmane at that time belonged, that's before we went into the longshore local. He spoke there. He spoke at other meetings. He went to the labor center. The loggers had a big banquet for him. And that's a very interesting thing in itself. The arrangements committee had decided to have it at, what was that restaurant that Dick Newbergers parents owned? The Bohemian. Well we had invited, well maybe

you'd better say I invited I'm sure I'm the one that thought of it, some leaders of the Negro community to come to the banquet and then the Bohemian informed me that they didn't admit Negroes. That's before we had a state civil rights law. So we informed the Bohemian that unless our Negro guests could be admitted that we were just going to go someplace and get hamburgers. So they let them in.

Tom : Do you remember what year that was?

Julia : Well let's see I think there's something in the files about it. Was it 1939, 1938? Oh it was after we went CIO because the AFOFL members of the committee as there was such a split then between the AF of L and the CIO that only two of them showed up. Mr. Stevens the chairman who was an ex-I.W.W. anyway and who was more CIO than AF of L then though he was an official in the AF of L local. And Paul Bursky who was the head of the state federation of labor. Well then I wanted to say what happens to people when they're out of prison. So then Mr. Becker came out and you notice that it's called the Rayfield Becker file which irritated me no end.

Tom : Why was that?

Julia : Well because his name was Ray Becker and of course that wasn't his real name, you understand that? And is his real name in the file because I cannot remember now what it was?

Tom : I don't think it is in the file. It's in the article by Gunns. (I search for it) Ralph Burgdorf.

Julia : That's right, that's right. That was his real name.

Tom : Why did he change his name?

Julia : Well it was quite customary for many members of the I.W.W. to simplify or take other names. It was quite a common practice. For instance I know one of the officials of the transportation workers branch local of the I.W.W. in Eugene whose name was Hans Philoky who called himself William Billings. Now whether

Julia 28

this was because many members of the I. .W. had been thrown in jail on various charges such as inciting riots and all sorts of spurious charges and whether they found that a practical means of escaping that type of thing when they moved to a new place I don't know. Or whether they just symplified their names because it was easier to say especially as a great many of them I suppose were foreign born like Hans Shiloky. He'd run off from the Prussian army on a ship and then jumped ship in this country. I don't know but anyway his father was a minister and during all the years that he was in prison no member of his family ever wrote to him or did anything to help him or sent him anything during all those many many years. And yet after his death the first thing that happened was while the longshoreman and the woodworkers and others were planning a huge funeral in other words he could lie in state, a brother showed up from Chicago, Illinois I believe to claim his remains and also the money that he had in the bank and his little log house and his five or six acres whatever it was around his little house. After some negotiating the brother agreed that we could go and view his body and during this one afternoon in the funeral parlor but that was all we were allowed to have to do with it. So delegations from different unions went there to view his remains and I went with some of the longshoreman and the heads of the woodworkers union including the boom men and rafters which is my favorite division of the woodworkers. And the man who was the secretary of the International Woodworkers of America took the I.W.A. button, the dress button off his coat lapel and Francis Murmane pinned it on Ray Becker's coat lapel in the coffin. And Francis Murmane and I had got some red carnations and had pinned one of those on his coat lapel as that was customary in the old days in funerals of the workers. But I'd like to say what people are like who are a long time in prison. He found it very difficult to get used to the food that we had outside of prison although after the defense effort

Julia 29

had been built up to the point where you could even find delegations of four and five state legislators going over to visit him in prison and all sorts of things like that. And where state representative Pierce had gotten involved in his defense, U.S. representative in congress Pierce. And all sorts of ministers and other persons and almost constantly delegations from the different unions were going over to visit him. So that he had been let out of maxium security and he was living as a trustee in a little house on the Walla Walla, the grounds. He was supposed to be working on the prison farm but still he was unused to all the meat and the rich food and deserts which working people if they were working had outside of prison. He was also unused to all that liberty and he couldn't manage money at all because he wasn't used to having any. He had learnt the trade of leather working in prison and of making horse hair belts and things and he had quite a bit of money to his account in the prison office not only from donations but money he had earned from he made sadels and braided bridals and things for people that rode around in rodeos. So he had quite a bit of money but this was in the prison office you see in his account. He wasn't used to having money. So he was always losing money. And any one thing that he saw lying on the floor like a piece of string he'd pick up and quickly look around to see if anyone saw him and put it his pocket because all of those things in the prison I suppose were of great value to you and it was something you really want to do. I remember one afternoon when he'd been to a meeting to speak earlier in the morning and a lot of people had come by my house to visit him and he got very upset about all this and he dashed out and we couldn't catch him and he disappeared and he was gone all the rest of the day. And when I asked him ~~what~~ his feelings were <sup>he</sup> said no it was just evidentaly the pressure of being free it was almost too much. And then I thought one thing that he did

Julia 30

that was extremely touching, there was quite a bit of money left in the Ray Becker treasury of the committee at the time that he was released and he donated that money to organizational activities in the woodworkers union. Is that in the file? Well that's what he did with it. But we couldn't interest him, he seemed to recognize a duty to go around and visit the locals that wanted to see him in person and speak to them. And he made quite creditable talks. They really were all right what he said. But he had gotten so wrapped up in his own defense that the world and its problems had rather passed him by. And so he occupied himself he went back to New York and visited a man back there who'd been extremely interested in the defense of the I.W.W.'s and had contributed to the Centralia case and to Ray Becker and also to the defense of the I.W.W. prisoners in Leavenworth. And he spent several months back there visiting him. Then he returned to Portland and he opened up a little store in Vancouver, Washington where he sold these braided belts that he made to the ship yard workers there during World War II. And during the time when he was living with me which he stayed with me for about three months in my little house in St. Johns. I had no car then any more than I have now and so I had a vacant garage and he taught my young son the leather trade. And to show you how gentle he was my son who was then who was possibly ten or eleven, twelve years old or somewhere around in there, was absolutely devoted to him. He was very very gentle. There were certain things he couldn't do. I remember one time a great many people had come to our house to see him and they all stayed to dinner and I cooked up this huge meal and I was very annoyed afterwards that all these people left without helping me with the dishes because I had to go to work at the timber worker office the next morning. So I told Ray and my son Mike that they had to do the dishes. And he absolutely had no idea how to

wash dishes and I thought that was very strange. But naturally all those years in prison he didn't have any facilities for dish washing in his cell. He had been an extremely nice looking man according to his pictures that were taken when he entered prison. You must have seen some of them didn't you in the file? But the first time that I saw him when I went to visit him in Walla Walla I came away with the strangest impression. He was a person who had not aged in prison and yet he didn't look young. He made me think, it was so sad, he made me think of an apple that's been kept in refrigeration for many many months and it still is an apple and yet it isn't a fresh apple off of a tree. And it was so sad. And that's the way that Eugene Barnett struck me also. And it also struck me very sad that after Eugene Barnett got out, and did we discuss the tragedy of his life that his wife, Eugene Barnett's wife wanted to leave him? She had I forget whether he was paroled at the end of twelve or fourteen years but anyway his wife -

(side two of tape one ends - Barnett's wife had cancer)

And he was allowed out on a compassionate leave from prison to be with her during her last days. But anyway he came to Portland. This was some time after he had been paroled and he had married and he had two small very charming children with him. He came up to the timber worker office where I was in charge of the Portland office of the timber workers and I took this little family to lunch. And he also looked the same as if the years he'd spent in prison and yet. He didn't look young but he evidently had wished to pick up his life the way it was when he went out and that's why he married this young woman and had these two little children because he couldn't give up the years during which people are getting married and having children and he'd lost -

Edna : He spent his honeymoon at our house, he and his bride.

Julia : Is that right? And I remember he struck me as a very gentle man. I remember one of the things we had was soup and it was very hot and the little boy, I think it was one boy and one girl, and he was very concerned that they shouldn't burn their mouths with a hot spoonful of soup and he bent over and blew on their soup to cool it with a gesture, that's not suppose to be very good manners, but with a gesture of such great gentleness. And then I remember also being perhaps a little puzzled and I don't think I was understanding men as I became later about these things. He was having financial difficulties and he thought that the Free Ray Becker Committee should raise the money, I forget what he wanted it for.

Edna : It was to start up his foxfarm.

Julia : To start up his foxfarm. And he also had some books of very bad poetry, very bad poetry that he had had to publish and he wanted us to sell these for him. And I couldn't understand why he thought that a committee that was set up for the specific purpose of getting Ray Becker out should, but he was so used to Elmer Smith and the Centralia Defense Committee solving all his problems.

Edna : Yes but with so many years in jail when he didn't have to get out and hussle.

Julia : That's right and I understood that in a vague way but yet not enough so that I was willing to do anything but buy them a lunch.

Edna : Well we had many of these incidents you know trials with him until Bill got very impatient and now you know we were younger then too and didn't realize what made him this way.

Julia : I'm not in favor of anyone who can keep out of prison ever going there for any reason. I'm in favor of people running away and living in the underground to do anything to avoid going there. There'll be enough people like Angle Davis. So



the man that went to Alaska that escaped and went to Alaska and Wesley Everest who shot it out on the bank of the Lewis River with his pursurers, they were the lucky ones.

Edna : The Chehalis River not the Lewis.

Julia : No the Chehalis your're right. Did you ever go out to that bridge where they hung him?

Edna : Oh yes.

Julia : And that damned corner<sup>of</sup> what was his name? He cut Wesley Everest's balls, as they call them, off in the car, didn't they say that in the affidavit? Did you read it? And he had them in a bottle of alcohol in his desk in the corner's office. Livingston. Well you're going to have to give me a glass of water I got to take these pills. (tape shut off and I show her the article on Centralia by McClelland. She begins to tell how they got Ray Becker out of prison.) We thought we could get him out through publicity. We thought we could force those people to release him if enough publicity was put on the case and we thought we were in a position to do it because whereas for many years after the demise of the I.W.W. there hadn't been any group to really push the steam and pressure and we regarded the ACLU as a bunch of unrealistic pantywaisters. We now had the Woodworkers Union and it was a good tough union. And then we began to get some help from the I.L.W.U.. So we believed we had an instrument to work with but we had to have something to hang the publicity on and so with Ray Becker's permission we requested a Congressional investigation of the whole thing. Now we never deluded ourselves that we were going to get one but we thought by asking for one it would give us a handle for publicity. So we got quite a few legislators interested in this idea and we wanted a LaFollette type investigation. Course we didn't think we were going to get it but it was just something to ask for. Well in the end we decided we'd use a new angle. We thought

we'd try to pry him out by scaring the wits out of some of those politicians up there that were still in political life that had been involved in the frame up. So we collected some of the more incriminating copies of the more incriminating affidavits. You can easily see which they were. And we tried to get an audience between a delagation from the committee and the governor. But we finally we weren't able to get it with the governor but we got it with the luetanant governor who was, what was his name? He was a song and dance man to start with he was quite a character, what was his name?

Tom : Murphy?

Julia : No. There must be something about it in the files isn't there?

Tom : It's hard to remember all the names.

Julia : Well anyway after all these years I can't remember myself what was his name. Anyway a carful of members of the committee including Mr. Stevens and myself, and Mr. Weber I believe and a couple other people went up to Olympia, Dick Meyers was his name, the luetnant governor, with this stuff. And Dick Meyers labor liked him and had connections with him so we didn't have any trouble to get an audience and how he ever got elected when the governor was the type of man he was I don't know, they were quite different. But we sat down with him and showed him all this stuff. So we got the point across that if we had to go through with this court action which Ray Becker wanted and we never told the luetanant governor we didn't think we were going to get the court action but we talked like we were, that's what we were going to get, this was all going to be aired in court. The newspapers will pick it up. Well now it wasn't to terribly long after that that Mr. Becker's sentence was commuted. Now you know how we got him out. But it made him very unhappy because he had hoped to get out on an unconditional pardon and sue the state of Washington. But at least we got him out.

Edna : How many years early?

Julia : He'd then been twenty years.

Edna : How many years early from his sentence?

Julia : Well what did he get twenty-five to -

Tom : Forty.

Julia : Forty years. Well if he got out in 1939 and this was in 1919 in jail, in prison.

Edna : Why did he get so much more of a sentence?

Julia : He didn't they all got the same but they came out on parole and he refused to take a parole. But you can see that really what pried him out was those affidavits and although he didn't type those affidavits or notarized those affidavits or get those affidavits they were secured on the basis of the patient investigation and the effort that he had made to note the case that was made by Elmer Smith. So you can say that there were two forces that united to get him out, the work of Elmer Smith which really didn't end with his death and the fact that the members of the I.W.W. who hadn't turned into "spittoon philosophers" but went on to organize the woodworkers union the way in which they had used that union as an effective means to collect these affidavits, to get the money that was necessary to fund the various efforts that that's what got him out. So in the end the attorney that he had fallen out with has played an influential part in getting him out too! All of us knew that and we all knew - I remember when Mr. Ganns wrote to me with great embarrassment to explain two letters that he'd got a hold of in which Ray Becker had been carrying on about somebody, the committee or , and he says, "Are you going to". He seemed very surprised that I was willing to give some of this what he apparently thought was incriminating documents to the University on this loan deposit, but you know that's all part of the history of it. Now I can't think of anything else. Can

you think of anything else you want to ask?

Tom : No. (I shut off the tape. Later we are talking about Elmer helping workers declare bankruptcy)

Edna : But he didn't make any money, he didn't do it for that. He did it because he thought why shouldn't these guys have a clean duck their bills and start over again. And I think he was one of the first lawyers who got the idea to do this.

Julia : Yes and during the lockout of the Woodworkers Union in Portland Irvine Godman told me that he would tell us what the woodworkers should do. And he said, come to think about it, he said this method that was employed by Elmer Smith. He said now you go out to that, what's the name of that place, where you buy legal forms? Well it's a bookstore where they sell legal forms.

Edna : You mean in Centralia?

Julia : No no here in Portland. He says for me to go up there and get some of these forms and he told me which ones to get and he would show me how to fill out a pauper's bankruptcy petition. So here the woodworkers are locked out for eight and a half months and we owed all these bills and Irvine Godman told me explain to the woodworkers because he wasn't their attorney, they had other attorneys. He said explain to the woodworkers that if they owe any little people like the corner grocery or the paper boy that they should pay that but not admit that they had done it because it would invalidate the whole proceeding and then they can go bankrupt on all these people that haven't donated to the soup kitchen and the strike fund which we did. Hundreds and hundreds of us went into bankruptcy. I filled out all those forms after he showed me how to do it. That was Elmer Smith. He helped to get us through that lockout. You know we won that lockout, we won it. And how many years was he dead by that time, that was in '37 and '38?

Edna : Elmer died in '32.

Julia : '32 yeah.

Edna : And Jim died the next year. There was a prince of a guy.

Julia : Did you like Elmer's wife?

Edna : Yes I did. Laura had a hard time coping with the situation.

Julia : I know. Well there was one other thing I didn't want to tell you but - (tape shut off) Among the little notes in Elmer's file there was a note that stated that the aunt and uncle of one of the men that had, one of the Legionaires, has some very interesting information about the way in which their nephew had died. Now as I recall that's about all it said, those aren't the exact words. So now I forget which of the four Legionaires it was but it wasn't Warren Grimm. Let's see the others were Ben Cassandra. One of them was named Mackelfresh and what was the fourth one? It was so long ago.

Tom : (I search through an article with the names in it) Okay here we go. "Mackelfresh, Grimm, Cassandra, Earl Watts."

Julia : Earl watts?

Tom : (Reading) "Was critically wounded several days" oh no he recovered.

Julia : Oh no because I can't remember that he was one. Someone else, there were four and the names are on that blooming statue up there.

Edna : Come the revolution that's the first thing were're going to do -

Tom : Hubbard!

Edna : Hubbard, yeah Hubbard. -- were're going march into Centralia million strong and tear that thing down.

Julia : Right I agree with that.

Edna : And build a new monument -

Julia : You'll find me marching right with the Communists when you do it too because I approve with that. In fact I think all the

workers will do it. But now it wasn't Hubbard and it wasn't Grimm so it was one of the other two. So I went to see this couple. Now they were quite elderly at the time I went to see them and they had testified for the defense for the defense because they had been down there watching the parade. At the time of the trial in Montesano they testified for the defense. So they were quite willing to tell me what Elmer meant in this extremely cryptic note that he had left. But they were not willing to sign an affidavit because they had suffered so hideously both from members of their family and neighbors and the town in general because although their nephew had died in that they had testified for the defense that they after all those years it was so sharp in their minds that they wouldn't make an affidavit. But I made an affidavit which you should have seen in the file at the time I turned it over to cover that. Time I turned that stuff over to the University of Washington. They say that when they went to the funeral parlor to view their nephew's body, they asked the coroner or his attendant, I mean the manager of the funeral parlor or his attendant where their nephew was shot. And he had not been shot, he died as the result getting the back of his head knocked in with a club. So do you see how he died. In the rush to break into the hall, the smashing of that hall since those men were carrying clubs and other things, one of his own war comrades had by accident and inadvertantly smashed in the back of his head. Now think of that. He wasn't killed by those that shot from within the hall to protect themselves. Now if you turn that off \* (tape is turned off. She talks about the Communists) (Later on the way home in the car I turned the tape recorder on again without her knowing it) Going back to Centralia after all those years after this had happened and talking to some of those people. I talked to a young man whose name I got off the lynch list that was no longer young and had grown up a lot since he had helped to lynch Waley Everest in Centralia and he had a family there. And I was very sorry for him

because he was trying to explain to me, I forget if he signed an affidavit or not, that he admitted that he was in the car that took Wesley Everest out to the bridge. Or at least he was in the group of cars that went out, I forget exactly which. He was very young when this happened, he got caught up in the mob hysteria and in the interim twenty years since had gotten interested in unions and I think he even belonged to one, maybe even the woodworkers union I forget! But if anyone had ever told me that I would ever have any sympathy for anyone that ever was involved in that I wouldn't have believed it. You know I had sympathy for him and I think even, nothing like that could ever have happened to me but I had different kinds of parents than he had with a different kind of upbringing with all these wonderful people that were always visiting out at our house. But I could see how it could happen to him and he had changed, obviously he had changed. And he was quite torn with what he thought he should do and I don't know if I remember finally talked him into signing an affidavit or if we didn't use it unless we had to or if he just wouldn't go quite that far. But in going around after all those years you can see the way that people's lives have been effected by all this. For instance I went to see that man that was leading the parade now what was his name, Cormier I believe. But anyway I couldn't get an affidavit out of him either but he was being eaten away by a strange disease and he obviously thought that this was judgement of God was on him. And it had eaten away one ear and it had eaten away one eye. He took off the patch and showed it to me and his days were numbered because it was going to eat away his brain. The doctors didn't know what it was. So he told me about some of things that happened to some of the others that were closely involved, the smashing into the jail and lynching Wesley Everest and it was really. He believed in that sort of thing which I don't. You just wondered. Several of them have been killed in accidents. One had committed

sucide and a great many of them the things that happened to them and then when the men began to come back on parole this man that had been the special prosec~~tt~~ter C.D. Cunningham. I'm sure is one of the wickdest people of all times was quite sure that they were going to get him. I suppose when you assist in sending someone up for twenty five to forty years you never think of them ever getting out and being a danger to you and neither do you think about the whole sentiment of the town changing like it had changed in that time. And so what he did when they began to come out he bought this large and savage dog and never went any~~pl~~ce without this dog because he thought one of these men were coming out on parole that they'd get him. And he didn't realize that in the first place the ones that I'd met were quite, not the kind of people that would hurt a fly and in the second plce after you have spent that many years in prison you just obviously don't have what it takes to go around killing people as a matter of revenge. And then I can't remember now whether it was John Lamb, it was one of the two older ones that got out on parole and went back to Centralia or whether it was that other one O.C. Bland, I think it was John Lamb, well some years after he was imprisoned some man move~~d~~ into his wife's house to help her with expenses and she had a child by him. Well when he got out of prison he went back home and they kept the child there. All these things and ways in which their lives had been changed by this experience, people to people inside and outside of prison.

(I shut off tape)



