THE 20th CENTURY TRADE UNION WOMAN: VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interviews

with

CARMEN LUCIA

United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union

by

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and

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VITAE

CARMEN LUCIA

Carmen Lucia was born in Calabria, Italy in 1902. Two years later her parents moved their large family of fourteen children to Rochester, New York. While picketing with her father at the age of eleven or twelve, she witnessed the shooting of an eighteen year old striker, Ida Braverman. Lucia views this incident as the beginning of her lifelong dedication to the labor movement.

As soon as she was fourteen--legally old enough to work--she began working in a clothing factory. She became the chairlady (shop steward) of her shop and quickly became active in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. In 1925 she was hired as a secretary to Abraham Chatman, International vice-president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. It was during this period that Lucia attended the Bryn Mawr Summer School. This was an extremely important educational and personal experience for her and she used this opportunity to make important union contacts. In 1930 she became an organizer for the Neckwear Workers Union and her career as a roving organizer, often times labeled "troubleshooter", was launched.

Lucia organized for a number of needle trades but primarily for the Millinery Workers Union (later called the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union). However, she did not limit her organizing to these groups. If time allowed, she assisted any group of workers who requested her incredible organizing skills and experience: retail department store workers, doll workers, and so forth. Her organizing work took her to all parts of the United States, most notably to California, Texas, and Connecticut. Such constant travel affected her marriage and created difficulties in raising her daughter but Lucia believes she did what she had to do: the labor movement was her life.

Carmen Lucia rose through the ranks of the union and in 1946 was elected vice-president of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union. She retired in 1974 at the age of 72.

Oral History Interview

with

CARMEN LUCIA

July 26, 1976

by

Seth Wigderson

INTERVIEWER: This is Tuesday, July 26, 1976, first tape of an interview with Carmen Lucia, 9:30 a.m. Some of the things I read about you said that you were born in Italy and came here when you were two years old, is this right?

LUCIA: Correct, yes. I was born in Italy.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you born?

LUCIA: I was born in Calabria.

INTERVIEWER: Calabria. That's in the south, isn't it?

LUCIA: Yes. (laughs) I'm southern.

INTERVIEWER: Southern. (laughs)

LUCIA: That's why I fitted very nicely in the southern situation. It was always a joke with me.

INTERVIEWER: But you have no memory of it. You came over here when you were . . .

LUCIA: . . . two years old.

INTERVIEWER: And what did your parents do? Were they . . .

LUCIA: Well, my parents couldn't speak English when they came here. Of course, Dad and our relatives that had preceded him had already been in Rochester. My father was an artist. What an artist!

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: And they went into the clothing factory. When they can't speak the language, you know, they're handicapped. And naturally, I followed through on the same path.

INTERVIEWER: Right. And where was this? You said this was in . . .

LUCIA: Rochester, New York.

INTERVIEWER: Rochester.

LUCIA: We all landed in Rochester, New York, yes. And I'm glad of it. I'm glad we didn't all land in New York City, because we didn't like to live in ghettoes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: Rochester had individual homes and the atmosphere was different. It's true that we all went to live in the neighborhoods at first where the people spoke our tongue. My parents made that decision for us. And that helped a great deal. But we had a better opportunity to grow up than we would have had if we had landed in the ghettoes of New York.

INTERVIEWER: Let's see, you were born in 1902?

LUCIA: 1902.

INTERVIEWER: And came here . . .

LUCIA: April the third, 1902.

INTERVIEWER: April 3, 1902. And you came here in 1904?

LUCIA: 1904, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you grew up in Rochester then?

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And went to school there?

LUCIA: Well, a little. I couldn't finish grammar school. I only went as far as the sixth grade in grammar school. And we couldn't afford to continue. You know, there were fourteen of us.

INTERVIEWER: Fourteen children in the family.

LUCIA: And I was the seventh child.

INTERVIEWER: Seventh child.

LUCIA: So, of course, each of us had to help the family.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: Naturally.

INTERVIEWER: So, you went to work when you were what?

LUCIA: I was fourteen.

INTERVIEWER: Fourteen?

LUCIA: I was home two years. I left school when I was twelve, and that was due to the fact that I didn't like the teacher I had. It was just a small school for poor Italian children. A parochial school. I asked too many questions and irritated the teacher. I decided one day I had had enough, and I took my tribe of brothers and sisters that were younger than me and brought them home. Well, in those days, in order to go to public schools, you needed books. If you--if your family had property--and we had a little home, even a little home--we couldn't get our books free. So when it came to buying books for me--I was the only one, I was the oldest one that had quit--Dad said, "You either go back to the Catholic school or you don't go back at all." So I stayed home. At that time, I couldn't go to work before I was fourteen. And so I was home for two years.

INTERVIEWER: So, even then you knew your own mind about what you wanted.

LUCIA: Apparently. And my dad was very strict. But somehow, he always had difficulty with me, much more than he did with the others. In fact, when we wanted a nickel to go to the show, my brothers and sisters would push me: "Carmen, go ask Dad for the nickel. You know how to handle him." (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: You started negotiating early.

LUCIA: Yeah, I started negotiating. So, I found out his weaknesses. He had a terrific, keen sense of humor. If I could find something cute to say to him, you know, he'd enjoy it, so that's how I got it.

INTERVIEWER: So then, you said you went to work when you were fourteen?

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And was that in the clothing industry?

LUCIA: In the clothing industry, as a machine operator.

INTERVIEWER: And this was what? What branch was this, caps or ladies millinery?

LUCIA: Oh no, it was in clothing workers. It's a men's clothing industry.

INTERVIEWER: So was your father in the union?

LUCIA: Oh, yes! We had gone through all kinds of family crises. The entire relations that were all in the clothing industry had a very bad period, while the union was in the process of being organized, because there was terrific opposition in the city to the unionization. And that sentiment was all over, all over the country. And periodically during that era, the tailors, including my father and all my relatives, would be out on strike. They never scabbed, though. That's one thing I'm glad about. They weren't too keen about being victimized that way, but--because it meant hardships for the entire relationship--but at least they were decent enough not to scab. I think what interested me mostly was--and I knew that it meant that we had to tighten our belts during that period--was I used to hear or read stories about picket lines. I was younger than twelve then, and I would say to my father, "Why can't you take me to the picket lines--take me to the picket line--I want to go to the picket line." Well, he didn't care too much to go, but they used to summon them to do picket duty. But one morning he did go. It happened to be a terrific morning for me, because that's what made up my mind that I wanted to do union work. The pickets were jammed against the door, trying to get into the plant and the employer went up on the second floor and he shot into the crowd. It's a very famous case amongst the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Her name was Ida Braverman. He shot in the crowd and killed the young woman, not far from where I was! When I saw the blood and saw and heard the hysteria of the people and the anger of the people, I was just furious. I would have just as soon got even with the employer, if I had a gun! I would have just as soon, if I had had a gun, a gun drawn, shot him, you know, got even with the employer. (laughs) But that made up my mind and I said to my father, "I know now what you mean, and when I grow up I'm going to be an organizer." So there it was, the very beginning.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me also about your parents, when they came over. I know there was a lot of unionism and in some sections of Italian workers there was anarchism, there were radicals, there were reactionaries--all sorts of different trends among the immigrants--and I was wondering . . .

LUCIA: Well, naturally, there were some radicals amongst them, but my father didn't have much to do with any of them. My father was in love with life too much. He had too much sense of humor to get serious about anything like that! He knew about it, but he didn't join it. But I had a brother who--the oldest of the children--who helped the Industrial Workers of the World. He got interested in that. So, of course, I tagged along with him. One of the others--I've forgotten their names now. (laughs) A long span in my memory--but Emma Goldman was a registered I.W.W. and I was asked to go to the labor lines, you know. So, it got into my blood. I must have either been born with this feeling for humans--or what they call them now, the humanities? (laughs)--or something. And so I pursued it as I went along.

INTERVIEWER: So you said you first started work at fourteen, in the men's clothing industry?

LUCIA: Yes. I became chairlady of Steinbloch. And, you know, it was a large shop in the clothing industry. It used to be quite a big center in Rochester, big clothing center.

INTERVIEWER: Stein--Steinbloch?

LUCIA: Steinbloch Company.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how it's spelled?

LUCIA: S-T-E-I-N- uh, two names, B-L-O-C- uh, H. It was B-L-O-C-H.

INTERVIEWER: Steinbloch Company. And this was in Rochester.

LUCIA: Yes. I was chairlady on one of the floors. Only I remember there were no blacks. I didn't meet my first black until I went to Atlanta years and years later. Because black people were not permitted in the factories in those days. It was lucky they took Italians! Because there were prejudices against the new bunch of immigrants kept coming in, and I know that it took years and years for Italians to get into Eastman Kodak Company. And so then I became very active in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. In 1925, I got a call from Abraham Chatman, who was the international union vice-president--even still is--of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

INTERVIEWER: Chatman.

LUCIA: Abraham Chatman. He's quite....He's developed amazingly. In fact, he and I didn't know too much when we both went in, but he had heard that they needed an Italian girl in the office who also knew--was favorable to the union--and he needed a secretary. He already had one, but he was losing her. So, he asked me to come in and be interviewed. Well, I thought, "How could I be a secretary?" I didn't have any education, you know. He said, "Well, don't worry about it, all you've got to learn right now is how to type and the rest you'll learn as you go along." And so, for a couple of weeks, I went and took typing. It was quite an opportunity for me because I wanted to get out of the tailor factory. I felt that I could do better, and, well, going into the union office is something I've always cherished. And in those times, they used to have locals for every speaking group--Polish local, or Lithuanian local, Jewish local, Italian local--and different things like that. So it was very interesting, very, very interesting. (pause) So I was there until--from about 1925 till 1930. In the meantime, now, there was a restlessness in the air.

INTERVIEWER: When Chatman....Was the international vice-president--it was the international office you went to then, or the local in Rochester?

LUCIA: In Rochester, now.

INTERVIEWER: In Rochester, okay.

LUCIA: Yeah, he's vice-president in the Rochester area.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. Okay. I have to ask you these things.

LUCIA: Well, he was. No, I beg your pardon, you're right. He is international, but he wasn't then, when he started with me. Later on he became international vice-president. And he still is in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.
There was an awakening on the part of people--the treatment, you know, the I.W.W. had gotten fed up. The wages were very poor. People wanted to be recognized as individuals and treated as such. And there was a stirring in the air--at least I felt that there was a stirring in the air--and the need for workers' education.

INTERVIEWER: This all began in the mid-twenties?

LUCIA: In the mid-twenties it had already started. I never had an opportunity to get into these things because my father was very strict. We couldn't go out at night, you know. We were just like nuns. We were treated like nuns. I wanted to learn something, so I joined the YWCA, which was the nearest center to pick. But we happened to have an industrial secretary who also had some of my ideas. And she sponsored all kinds of activities and learning about being in, and reciprocating to the colleges that were also interested in learning about unions. So she had what we called meetings for training the college girls and the factory girls. Then I heard about Bryn Mawr Summer School. Hilda Smith, who I still admire--she is very ill right now--was the dean of Bryn Mawr. She had been in Germany and she had seen that there was work, educational work being done amongst the workers. She thought maybe that it's a waste. She thought that it was really a waste to keep the universities closed during the summer, when they could be utilized for educational work for workers who didn't have the opportunity of going to school. So in 1927, 1930--for two summers--I went to Bryn Mawr. It used to be for six and eight weeks each term. During that period, I think it was in 1926--I forget the dates sometimes--when the Sacco and Vanzetti case . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: . . .was exploding in the air, and in the conscience of the American people. I was very active in that because my brothers were carrying the torch for Sacco and Vanzetti in Rochester. Bryn Mawr might have got into trouble at that time because we got arrested in Philadelphia when we went to one of the rallies. I didn't, but some people did. And the next day, there was a great big caption in the newspapers, the Philadelphia papers: "Bryn Mawr: Hotbed of Radicalism." We weren't wanted in the first place. But, then, when we hit the front page of the papers, it really became very bad. But then, as a result of Bryn Mawr, Hilda

LUCIA: Smith began to think in terms of opening schools or opportunities in other parts; Brookwood College, which later became a little too radical, you know. And in the South, Briarcliff, I think, Briar-something, in California. There were four or five different schools that had been opened up as a result. So the experience in Bryn Mawr was traumatic. You know, it was my first contact with communists. Oh, my roommate was a member of the Communist Party, but at the time, I didn't know it. And because I became the president of the class that year, all the communists began to work on me. It seemed to them that I was a potential candidate--a potential member. But somehow, that didn't bind. While I agreed with some of the principles--because at that time, with Red Alarms all over, and then you could see that we were waiting for some kind of Messiah to take us out of the economic disaster we were facing. And while I was sympathetic to some of their ideas, I didn't ever belong. In fact, I wasn't even a fellow traveller.

INTERVIEWER: And all this was 1927 and 1930?

LUCIA: Yes. 1927 and 1930. Well, then in 1930, I decided I had had enough of parental guidance. I loved mine--they were wonderful. But I felt Dad was a little bit too strict. And I felt, oh, if I go back to Rochester from Bryn Mawr, I'll never be free, because an Italian girl leaving home was like becoming a prostitute, you know, in the eyes of the Italian community. And I thought, "I don't like that kind of scandal or my people to go through an embarrassing period. The best thing for me to do is not to go back."

INTERVIEWER: And you were twenty-eight?

LUCIA: I was twenty-eight.

INTERVIEWER: Please stop for a minute.

(Break in tape)

LUCIA: I forgot where I was.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you were talking about in 1930, you decided that you weren't going to go back to Rochester.

LUCIA: So I made some contacts in the school. The Neckwear Workers Union in New York City was looking for organizers.

INTERVIEWER: Neckwear Workers?

LUCIA: Yes, They weren't--they were an independent union. They were not affiliated with anybody at that particular time, except the AF of L. They were not an international.

INTERVIEWER: No? Just a couple of New York City locals?

LUCIA: Well, they had--did they have any?--New York and New Jersey, I think, were the only ones that were organized.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: At that time, I went to see Louis Fuchs, who was the president of the New York Neckwear Workers Union. And he said yes, they would hire me, but....Now, wait a minute. That happened in 1930. (pause) Was I married or wasn't I married? (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: (laughs) I don't know!

LUCIA: Neckwear Workers Union....No, I couldn't have been back in 1930. Okay. So I was sent to New Haven.

INTERVIEWER: New Haven?

LUCIA: New Haven, Connecticut. And there it was, a runaway shop. One of these shops that, during that period, they were running away from unions. These fly-by-night kind of shops, they were called. And people would wake up in the city and they'd find that there was a little factory, they had come in from New York or New Jersey, and that help was needed in these factories. But they had this system that you were only here for six weeks on a trial period. "After six weeks, then we'll pay you, but we won't know until six weeks whether you're going to do or not." So, the union urged me to apply and it so happened that they were nearly all Italian girls anyway. And I would have fit in just right. So I kept--for about a week--I kept going with my lunch in my hand and my scissors and everything and they couldn't find an Italian family for me to room with. And I was supposed to be an orphan here....I had thirteen brothers and sisters! And I was hired.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the company, do you remember?

LUCIA: I would if I could look in my files.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, bring them in.

(Break in tape)

INTERVIEWER: So, you're in New Haven.

LUCIA: So I was hired. The union had an outside organizer by the name of Sullivan--beautiful Irish girl, oh, she was a beauty. She came from Boston. And of course, she and I worked together. I worked inside and I'd tell her what happened in the shops so she could utilize it, you know. So one day I get a call from the foreman--can't think of his name either. He said, "Carmen, we like the way you learned the work. You look very intelligent." He said, "We need someone who's going to help us to find out who's the union representative in this shop."

INTERVIEWER: (laughs)

LUCIA: I've always enjoyed that. And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" So he said, "There's certain things we want you to do." He says, "When I give you the signal to go to the ladies room, you listen to the conversation then come back and tell me what you hear." I said, "But what is it, what's in it for me?" A natural question. "Well, your piecework--make sure that you maintain your average. And we'll take care of you." And I said, "Well, I don't care so much about money, although I can use it, but I want to be sure that I'm kept on all the time, because I need the work. I'm, you know, an orphan." They used to call me little orphan Annie. And I became--the girls all felt sorry for me. I didn't have a mother, I didn't have a father, I didn't have anybody; nobody loved me. And, of course, I made capital of that, you know. (laughs) I'd shed a few tears sometimes. I think I should have been an actress. I became very popular. So, when I'd go, I'd listen, and come back and--"Well, what did she say? Did she say anything suspicious?" They had a right to be suspicious of her. And I'd say, "You got nothing to worry about." I said to him beforehand, "You know, Sam, I've got to talk for the union when I listen, because if I don't talk for the union, then they're afraid and I can't get anything from them." So, I'd go back and say, "You've got nothing to worry about. She's not for the union, not her." Or if she was against the union, I'd say she <u>was</u> for the union.

INTERVIEWER: Was for the union?

LUCIA: Then they'd give her hell all day long to make it miserable so then I'd go back to Rose Sullivan and say, "Go work on her. They really worked on her. I think you could get her turned around." Well, this was the way it worked. Then finally it came where they needed somebody, they were finally confronted, they had asked for union recognition. I was still in the shop. I was just a worker. And they wanted a committee. So Sam thought, "Well, Carmen ought to be on that committee." So, I was put on the committee representing the company. What worried me is that I couldn't tell the girls, you know, the truth, when the strike.... Finally I worked on the committee and I didn't work very hard for it, naturally. When the strike was to be called, I was the one delegated to pull the power--in those days that was the way they used to call a strike. They'd pull the power, shut the power off and say, "Everybody out!" And lo and behold, Sam, on that bloody day, he dropped dead when he saw me pull the power and say, "Everybody out!" (laughs) The mistake that was made in that strike--and by the way--I'll never forget the day of the strike, it was in winter. Those days in New Haven, bitterly cold! You couldn't even get the windshield wipers to work, you know. It was the frost. They used to put candles inside to keep the frost from hiding the view. We found one of the strikers had a place, right opposite the shop, which we immediately used. We paid for the use of the place, and we got chairs and everything. It was ideal. You know, right across the street, the pickets could go

LUCIA: and get warm, and then come back. And we had a soup kitchen; right away we organized a soup kitchen. The strike lasted--it was a very bitter long strike--the strike lasted from January or February. No, it was February the fourth. It was a holiday! I don't remember whether it was the fourth . . .

INTERVIEWER: The twelfth?

LUCIA: Lincoln's birthday, that was it!

INTERVIEWER: Lincoln's birthday, the twenty-first.

LUCIA: No, twelfth.

INTERVIEWER: Twelfth--right.

LUCIA: Yeah, the twelfth of February, 1930. And it lasted till the day before Thanksgiving. The reason for that was that the neckwear workers felt that they had to make an example of this man who had left New York. They really raised money, they were old-time workers in the factories who came from Europe who had a certain amount of idealism and were willing to sacrifice some of their small pay to keep this strike going. And arrests--we had arrests of all kinds. I know I was arrested, oh, any number of times because I used to get the cops's goat--which I learned later on to handle them differently. But then they used to berate them, you know. "Brass buttons, blue coat, can't catch a nanny goat!" I was young, you know, and you can imagine they'd get so irritated, they could skin me!

INTERVIEWER: Brass buttons . . .

LUCIA: "Brass buttons, blue coat, can't catch a nanny goat!" (laughs) I was pretty quick on the trigger on everything. And so they used to whistle, "Da-dum, da-dum, the scabs go in, the scabs go out...." I was arrested about ten times, in one day alone, because as soon as I was released, I'd go back on the picket line, and I'd start all over! "Can't keep me in, you know! The union will get me out!" Which was ridiculous, because it cost the union money. But I enjoyed it. Then I was in charge of giving the strike benefits out in a region. I don't know--seven dollars a week, five dollars a week--I don't remember, you know. And the money was running out, and the strike....The shop got full of scabs. With three-hundred and fifty strikers out--there were a lot of foreign people, in those days, and they had to give it up. So I had the dirty job of telling the people that there's just no more--sorry. Couldn't get the people back. We didn't even have a break in the ranks of the people. There we had a very peculiar situation. We had families that were torn apart as a result of the strike. People who'd stay in--maybe mothers would stay in, their children were out, or vice versa, you know. So, it tore families apart. Because I remember one incident that there was a family of three daughters and a son-in-law, and the mother working in the plant, scabbing. I made up my mind that I

LUCIA: was going to get them in trouble. So I'd taunt them, you know, and they'd go in. So they decided one day that they'd had enough of my taunting, so they started to wipe the floor with me. And the police came, and I was being beaten up by the family, not too bad. And they had me arrested, and I said, "She started it, I want her arrested!" So, first the mother alone--they picked up the mother. "She started it!" So I said to the girls, "You're not going to let your mother go alone," and they did. And the reason that they did is because Rose Sullivan--who, by the way, was the spearhead of the whole thing, she was the bravest on the outside, she was marvelous. She had a friend who came in from Boston one day, and--just a friend, not connected with the movement at all--and she was on the picket line, and that night, she was arrested. And as she was getting into the patrol wagon, her friend said to her, "I don't want you to go alone. I'm coming along with you." (laughs) And when they got there, both of them were booked! And the cops said to her, "Anybody that comes out of the patrol wagon was automatically booked."
So I said to the girls, I said, "You're not going to let your mother go alone, I wouldn't let my mother go alone to jail." So one of them said, "I'll go," and another said, "Well, as long as you go, I'll go." So they all five of them got into the patrol wagon with me. And when we got there we were all booked. And they were going to put me in the same cell, I said, "Oh, no, you're not! You're going to put me in a private cell, not with that family." Anyway, we were--they had more difficulty. I was out before they were because they had to raise money for five people. My union got me out in no time.

INTERVIEWER: So, this is 1931 now, middle of the Depression.

LUCIA: Well, the Depression wasn't really over.

INTERVIEWER: No, the middle, the worst part, actually.

LUCIA: Oh, no! Because--wait a minute--no, because I'm coming to that later.

INTERVIEWER: One thing--did you get help from the community? I mean, were there . . .

LUCIA: Yeah, well that's what it was. We also established contact with the Divinity School in Yale. Because we heard that Reverend Ladd--now why that name sticks with me--Reverend Ladd and his wife were considered, you know, sort of peace workers.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I've heard the name.

LUCIA: Have you? And Rose was wonderful for that sort of thing. She was beautiful and she was Irish, and you know, she made the contacts very nicely. We had a little Italian girl who looked like she had never had a square meal in their life. We used to use her as our Exhibit A. And she had told her story so pathetically . . .

(Break in tape)

LUCIA: . . .all week on ties and maybe earn five dollars or something like that. She used to tell that story when we had those prominent women....Some of the women were really crying. And one day, the family....Rose got them on the picket line. So we told our girls, "In the morning, we can call the scabs all the names we want. But at night, when the nice ladies come, you behave." But what happened when we called them names in the morning, they were mad all day long. They couldn't wait till they got out and they thought, "If they ever start with us, we'll give it to them!" So they came out mad and they'd start the fights. So we said, "See. That's what we have to put up with." (laughs) And we got arrested and the wife of the president of the Chamber of Commerce--I don't remember her name--was arrested along with us. You can imagine what--when she got out of the patrol wagon, and she told her name....The sergeant said, "You're kidding!" She said, "No, I'm not!" He says, "You're kidding. I'm not going to believe you." And he didn't believe her and he booked her. I don't know what happened to him but he certainly had a hard time. Well, we got some good publicity then, but we did....The Divinity school students used to come on the picket line and help us, and it--we got quite a bit of help, but not enough. You know, there was no money and, well, we tried to get as many people back as possible. But, by that time--oh, that's what I wanted to tell you. I was supposed to have been married. When I left Rochester, I already had....My husband had been with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers as a secretary, uh, financial secretary, but he was head of the office. They had a big office, because they had a big organization in those days. And he had gone to New York. He had quit and gone to New York. And I was supposed to have been married any weekend. I'd say, "As soon as the strike is over, I'll come to New York and marry you." Because he happened to be a divorced man. My people, you know, being Catholics, was one reason why I didn't want to go back to Rochester, besides some other factors. And so the pickets got tired of hearing me say, "Well, next weekend, I'm going to get married, next weekend." So one time they picked me up bodily, and, on a Friday afternoon, put me on a train! They decided that I ought to get married, that's all there is to it. The strike was lasting too long. And, that's when Rose Sullivan threw such a tantrum, and when I heard about it....I thought that I'd use it when I came back, you know. So that was 1930. The strike was lost. We couldn't get the people back, and I left. Now, where did I go next? Oh, in the meantime, I was married, and . . .

INTERVIEWER: And your husband's name was . . .

LUCIA: Leo Kowski.

INTERVIEWER: How do you spell that last name?

LUCIA: K-O-W-S-K-I.

INTERVIEWER: Polish?

LUCIA: Yeah, Polish.

INTERVIEWER: Polish.

LUCIA: Polish--German-Polish--from Germany, on the borderline. Of course, he was American born. His father and mother were from there. He spoke German; he didn't speak Polish. The funny part is that he spoke German. Where was I? New York, back to New York. So, soon after I went to Philadelphia. I went to Philadelphia. No, I already had the baby then. No, I didn't. The baby was born in 1932, excuse me. But, what happened was that, uh....(pause) I went to work for the Amalgamated. I was married, and I was looking for a job, you know, up in....No, that doesn't sound right.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't we pick the story up where you remember and later on we can go back?

LUCIA: Yeah, well anyway, at one period I was--between 1930 and 1934--I had to continue working, because, even though, after I was, I got my baby, I had to go back to work, because my husband was very, very ill. He had a tubercular kidney. And they didn't know it was tubercular at the time. And all they'd do is take the kidney out and clean it and put it back, you know. And a few months later he was back in the hospital. So during all that period....Oh, in the meantime I was pregnant. So we didn't have a cent to our name, you know. And we had to register for some relief or other, you know. And I knew it would break my people's heart. The Italians were very proud in those days, and getting relief was the last thing. I think to a certain extent we still are, a certain portion of us.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you working then?

LUCIA: I was working in New York.

INTERVIEWER: In New York?

LUCIA: In New York, yeah. I didn't go back to Rochester. And so I knew I had to go back to work, even though the baby was only an infant, a few weeks old. We needed money. My people would come from Rochester and they'd help me all they could, you know. Every time one of them would come for a visit, they'd leave some money in a drawer, or something like that. They didn't want to embarrass me by giving me money. By that time, the bread lines were notoriously long. Oh, it was awful. Now, this was already 1930, 1931, yeah, 1931, 1932, and I had to stand in line, pregnant, big as I was, from eight o'clock in the morning, maybe sooner. And the first day, I waited and waited and by the time it got to five o'clock, I was getting apprehensive, because at five, they closed. And, I didn't make it the first day, so the next day, I went a little bit earlier, and finally got registered. Then before they'd give you any relief, they'd come and investigate.

LUCIA: Well, we had only been married a short time, our things were fairly clean and new, and I always kept a neat home, you know. But the fact that we had a telephone in the house deprived us of getting any relief. I said, "Well, look, my husband's in the hospital. I'm pregnant. I'm alone. If anything happened to me, at least I could call, you know. I need that very badly." "You have the telephone; you're not eligible." Well, anyway, I finally got on. And what did they give you? They gave you food that had been in the warehouses for years, you know. Some of it wasn't fit to be eaten. They cleaned out all the bins of all this food that sometimes we sent to Europe, you know. Or at least we used to. And people complained so much that it was not fit to be eaten, so they decided to....In the meantime, Roosevelt, the NRA, was being started and so forth, and so on. And he was the one that ordered some relief and money and we got the sum of three dollars a week. To keep us in food. Of course, they practically gave the food away in those days because bread was five cents a loaf or something like that.
Well, anyway, to make a long story short, we decided to....I went.... I was sent to Chicago by the neckwear workers. I had to go wherever they sent me in spite of the fact that I had this little child. You know, and my husband was ill anyway. He couldn't work, so he took care of the baby while I was gone. And we had a general strike at the neckwear workers in Philadelphia. That was in 1934. By that time, section 7A of the NRA was in, which gave the workers the right to belong to the union for the first time in the history of organized labor. And folks from the neckwear workers called a strike of every neckwear plant in Philadelphia. There was quite a number of them and I was assigned to take care of the picket lines from one place to another. And I remember one morning all the....One picket line of about two hundred or three hundred people were arrested, because we had formed a daisy chain around the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Just holding hands around the plant?

LUCIA: Holding hands and they wouldn't let anybody in. So they hurled us into patrol wagons and they filled up the jails with screaming girls, and top quality union sons, you know. And they got so tired of us singing that they finally....I don't know whether the union got us out or how, I don't remember. I know we got out, but we were in there almost all day. If you can imagine even the flushing--the toilets flushed automatically. And some girls used to be astride it, standing up, you know? (laughs) And they'd forget, they'd get excited, and their foot would go in and they'd scream bloody murder. And we'd rattle all kinds of things against the bars, you know. I think we made it very, very tough for them.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me one thing. When you worked in Rochester, you worked solely with Italian women?

LUCIA: Oh, no, no! In Rochester I was with the Amalgamated Clothing . . .

INTERVIEWER: But the workers were mostly women and mostly Italian?

LUCIA: Oh, yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And then again in New Haven.

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How about in Philadelphia, now. Was this new?

LUCIA: We had mostly women. Very few men. And mostly in key positions. They were the elite, cutters. Always the elite of the.... And they very seldom came out and if they did, it'd be a miracle.

INTERVIEWER: Were these Italian? Were the women Italian?

LUCIA: Oh, not always Italian.

INTERVIEWER: In Philadelphia?

LUCIA: They were a mixed group. Mixed group. And I remember one old lady who wore sneakers. I remember we finally....In the picket line it was hot as hell, you know? Philadelphia could be very muggy. And she wore sneakers. Sneakers rubbed on her heel and it would bleed, you know? I remember little incidents. They were very big to me in those days. And what happened was that we got some kind of an agreement and it was a very innocuous agreement. I didn't like it one bit. From there I went to.... Oh! I went to Chicago. Also for the neckwear workers. (pause)

INTERVIEWER: This was still in 1934, or . . .

LUCIA: Around 1934, yeah. 1933, 1934. Somewhere around there. And, unfortunately, the woman, the Chicago woman didn't like me--as soon as I arrived--didn't like my freshness, I guess. And she made it very difficult for me. And when I went on the picket line one day....The pickets were standing in a corner with their signs, but not picketing. So I went there and asked what's the matter. Why aren't you picketing? They said, "That cop over there, he's a mean bastard, you know." And I said, "Oh, come on. You have a legal right to picket, as long as you picket and you don't bother anybody, he can't do anything to hurt you." They said, "That's what you think." I said, "Alright, give me the sign and I'll go." I thought if I take it and chant, they'll come. They didn't. They knew better than I did. And when the scabs came out....Now, what could one person, a woman, do with a sign? There were--police were all over. But they, the police, were in my way. They had formed a cordon for the scabs to come through, you know. And I said, they're not going to keep me from going through there, you know. I said, "Excuse me. I've got to picket." (laughs) So I did that. I was foolish then. I didn't want to--I would never have attacked her. I put my hand on her and I said, "Listen honey, I want to talk to you." As soon as my hand touched her shoulder, I don't know what happened. A ton of bricks fell on me. I was severely beaten.

INTERVIEWER: By the cops?

LUCIA: By the cops. Taken in an alley....And if I hadn't had a big fur collar on my coat, he'd have bashed my brains out. He was that mean. Because he got mad when I defied....I couldn't get the girls backing. Even when I tried to get the girls backing--and I could never succeed. He said, "We'll teach her a lesson." What I found out was that the woman had forgotten to....The other organizer had forgotten to pay the cops that day. In those days, you had to grease their palms in order for them to leave you alone. You know, especially in Chicago. And so they really beat me, and they called the patrol wagon and as I was getting in, I said to him, "You wouldn't do that to Al Capone, you son of a so-and-so." He gave me a kick right in the end of my spine, you know. And he pushed me. A policeman said, "Don't talk to him that way, he's awfully mean." He said, "You'll only hurt yourself." So when I got to the police station, it was the first time that I really began to feel the pain. He had pushed--pulled my arm out of my socket. I was bleeding from the mouth. I was bleeding from several places. And that's when I began to feel....I was too angry to feel pain at the time. But when I cooled off a little bit, I found that I was hurt . So the matron said, "I'll call a doctor." When the doctor came, he said, "Who did this to you?" Because, you know, she wanted to strip me, like they treat prostitutes, and give me a bath and all that sort of stuff. I said, "Over my dead body. If you touch me, I'll kick you." And so she saw that I was really hurt so she called the doctor. And he said, "Who did this to you?" I said, "The sergeant on the line." And he knew I wasn't a prostitute or at least he thought I wasn't, and he said, "I'm not going to fix that arm right now. I want your union...." He said, "Are you going to be bailed out soon?" I said, "I hope so." I was in terrible agony. "Because I want your union to use that against the policeman. We've had too many complaints against that sergeant on the line."
So finally, finally they found what station I was in and they came, and got me out. They got me to the hospital. And how they did it, how that doctor yanked the arm to put it back in the socket--I've never forgotten that pain as long as I've lived. The girl who was in it--she felt terrible. The girl whose arm I had laid the hand on felt very badly that was the result. She saw the beating I got. I understood that she went that same day--it was the next day--she went and got the girls to go and join the union. She said, "Anybody that could be beaten up like that for the sake of trying to help us should be rewarded," or something to that effect. Anyway, I heard....The beating was worthwhile. We got the shop in the union.
Then I had an accident in Chicago. A Greyhound bus hit me. And that was my fault. And I didn't have a suit to my name. And in the meantime, this woman was vicious, the union organizer there. She was jealous. She was so afraid I was going to take her job, you know. I don't know if she told Fuchs. They decided to drop me. I didn't have a penny to come back to, you know. And the union didn't pay me anything, but the labor movement--the Jewish labor movement had heard about it. I had already addressed their group, once.

INTERVIEWER: The Workman's Circle?

LUCIA: Yes. The Workman's Circle.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: They'd always been my friends. And the Workman's Circle heard about it and they raised the money to pay my expenses back to home. So I vowed to my father and my husband that I'd never have anything to do with the labor movement again! You know, if they could do that to a person who was injured on behalf of the work, you know. But then, I had to go back to work. So I got work with the WPA at worker's education or something. It was rather vague. And it was at 60 Center Street, the office. And it was a federal education program. But I didn't last more than three weeks because the man who was in charge was so fresh, so I had to quit.

INTERVIEWER: He made passes at you?

LUCIA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

LUCIA: And he made passes at me and made my life unpleasant. One day I was walking on Union Square and I met someone from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers who was the vice-president. He was head of the shirt workers union. And he said, "Where have you been? We've missed you." He used to come to Rochester quite often. I told him all that had happened. He said, "Well, you can come with us." He said, "I'm looking for a girl because we've got an employer who has three shops: one in Albany, one in Troy, and one in Kingston. And we need three organizers, one for each place. And you'd fit in Albany very nicely. I could make it easy for you to come see your family every once in a while." So he hired me, even though I had left the Amalgamated with a little bit of a stink, you know. They didn't like the reason why I didn't come back, after they had given me the job in Rochester, so they were a little disappointed. Anyway, I got in with the Amalgamated. And my husband was still ill, so he stayed and took care of the child. And they sent me to Albany, New York.

INTERVIEWER: Now what--do you know what year that was? I think there's something marked Albany in here.

LUCIA: Is it?

INTERVIEWER: Hang on. (Ruffles through papers) Oh, Baltimore, not Albany.

LUCIA: I know I've got them stuck somewhere like that. Because I got pictures of. . . . That's Richmond, Norwalk.

INTERVIEWER: I thought I saw one that said Albany. No, there's not. . . . Worcester.

LUCIA: I don't know what could. . . . Milford, Buffalo. I don't know exactly. . . . Tuscola, Illinois. . . . March of 1938. Where are we now? What year are we in?

INTERVIEWER: 1934, 1930--something like that. When you were sent to Albany.

(Break in tape)

LUCIA: The Neckwear Workers. . . . Neckwear, so we . . .

INTERVIEWER: So the ACW--the Amalgamated--sent you to Albany.

LUCIA: Yes. I was in charge of the Albany situation and there again, this was another runaway shop from New York. And the Amalgamated was interested in organizing the three plants at one time. That's why they started the campaign in all three places. And we have so much happening there. It's funny. I can't retrace in my memory on how. . . . (interference) . . . because we had master lists and we had. . . . The Amalgamated came in. Petofsky came in to settle and was during the NRA, when the minimum wage had gone--the federal minimum wage of thirteen dollars a week--had tentatively gone into effect. They were working on industry minimums--pending the result of the minimum industries--they inaugurated the thirteen dollars a week. We had a strike there for quite some time. Six or seven weeks, maybe longer. And it was called in all three places: Albany, Troy, and Kingston. So it was very effective. We had three shops closed down tight. Nothing was moving. They were finding it hard to get strike breakers and it looked like we had pretty good control. Along comes Petofsky and a committee. And I wasn't invited for negotiations. I didn't participate. But I think that they had their meetings in New York. They settled over in New York. Well, I didn't like their settlement. I think they got an increase of something like twenty-six cents a week. And union recognition. Well, I had never belittled union recognition as such, providing it was a closed union shop. We didn't even get a closed union shop. So they went. . . . I don't know why they didn't. . . . Maybe they didn't trust me. They went first to Troy. And the girl there, Rita, who was full of fun and goodness and everything else, she engineered a party and she ordered beer and sandwiches and everything. And they had the meeting. I was in prison, but I heard about it. And they accepted it! They went to. . . . Did I say Troy?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: And then Kingston.

INTERVIEWER: And then Kingston.

LUCIA: And they did the same thing. Whoever was in charge there, and they did the same thing. They accepted it. My place was the third one. I had said to the girls, "If you don't like what they proposed. . . ." They didn't tell me what had happened in the other two. I learned afterwards. I said, "You don't have to

LUCIA: take it, you know. You can get up and protest and voice your opinion." A lot of them took me literally. And it was lousy. Anyway, it was terrible. And so Petofsky sweated blood. He said to me, "Why didn't you get your people ready? To make a motion to accept?" I said, "Well, if you ask me, I think it stinks. I'm glad, I'm glad that they're not taking it." They must have been at it for about six hours before they finally consented to accept. Well, you know what happened? Two weeks later, I got a little slip in my envelope, that I was no longer needed, that the work was done. I was no longer needed. That was my second bout with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of Petofsky.

LUCIA: Oh who?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: Petofsky?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, as a leader.

LUCIA: Well, I lost all respect for the Amalgamated, the way they treated me. Because I didn't go through the whole story of what happened in Rochester, you know? There was a stinking situation. There was a wonderful union, don't misunderstand me. When they first started out, I was so proud of them. They had a preamble--of the class struggle, in their preamble; everything, and it was right up my tree, you know. But little by little, while I was in Rochester, dissention began to grow. You don't mind my going back, do you?

INTERVIEWER: No, go ahead.

LUCIA: Going back--dissention.

INTERVIEWER: As we go on, I'm beginning to see where the holes are in the story and I can ask questions as you go back and we can figure it out. So, let's do it.

LUCIA: Well, the Amalgamated in Rochester. . . . Because they had all these foreign speaking locals. The Italian local was the biggest local of them all. And they were fighting for proportional representation. Because no matter how--you know, they had--two thirds of the membership were Italians! So the women's local had two delegates. Each one had two delegates at the joint board.

INTERVIEWER: Right, right.

LUCIA: Representatives at the joint board. Well, they. . . . Remember the others were more or less controlled by. . . . Because they were small, they were controlled by the administration. While I was Chatman's secretary at the time, and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Now, let me get this name right. C-H- . . .

LUCIA: Chatman. Chatman.

INTERVIEWER: C-H-A-T-M-A-N.

LUCIA: T-M-A-N. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay.

LUCIA: And the people would come the next day, if there was a meeting, and they'd take the floor. They'd come practically crying! "I lost my job!" "What happened?" "Well, the company got a call from the union saying they shouldn't have put me back to work." I said, "Well, what happened?" "Well, we had a meeting last night. I expressed my opinion." Well, this happened over and over. Not only did they deprive him of a job, but they kept it on him for so long until, you know, he began to feel, "What kind of a union is this? You can't even express your mind without penalizing me and the whole family." The livelihood was at stake. So, I began to be very active. And I suppose there was a certain amount of nationlism involved, too. They happened to be Italians, and they could pour their heart out on Chatman to me. And so forth.
So I began to answer them. "Well, why don't you do something?" Well, you know. So, it got to the point where apparently Chatman got ahold of my attitude, and then when I was a member of the Woman's Local, I'd get up and express an opinion, too. Well, maybe it wasn't mine. After all, I was a secretary. The least I could do was keep quiet and not say anything. But they didn't like it. And the result was, that they made up their mind that they were going to get rid of me. But they were afraid to get rid of me because I was an Italian. Give the Italians an extra. . . . (laughs) So they froze me out. So, little by little, they gave me less and less work. I used to have to man the switchboard as well and they got rid of the switchboard. And the individual phones, and I wasn't given any work. I just would hang around, you know, so I just up and quit. So that was the story. So when I got burnt the second time with the Amalgamated, I deserved it!! Because I shouldn't have come back in the first place. Now, where are we now?

INTERVIEWER: You just got bounced out of ACW. . . .Amalgamated, after Albany.

LUCIA: Amalgamated. . . .yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, well. What happened? So they eventually voted for the Woman's . . .

LUCIA: They voted for it, naturally. And I was. . . . I found I was out of a job. By that time, that's when I was pregnant anyways. So it didn't matter. So if I was pregnant, it must have been. . . . It must have been. . . . My daughter was born in 1932. So it must have been 1931, I don't know. Maybe I'm getting mixed up a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: How many children have you got?

LUCIA: I only got one! (laughs) Didn't have time for anymore!!

INTERVIEWER: And when you were in Chicago, was that after your baby was born?

LUCIA: Yes. My baby was born . . .

INTERVIEWER: First Albany, then Chicago. What are the dates again?

LUCIA: No, it must have been after. Wait a minute. Chicago must have come after.

INTERVIEWER: So when you left. . . . So when you were through with that, then you were through with Amalgamated?

LUCIA: Did I say 1934?

INTERVIEWER: 1934.

LUCIA: Oh, yes. Yes, because Margie was born in 1932.

INTERVIEWER: This is the second tape of the Carmen Lucia interview.

LUCIA: Am I talking too much?

INTERVIEWER: No, no! I think it's really good.

LUCIA: Think so?

INTERVIEWER: See, most of what we have is official history, you know? Everything is pretty, everything is neat. And it really helps to have somebody who went through with an open eye, and remembers it well, like you do. We're talking about when you left the Amalgamated, after the Albany strike.

LUCIA: Yes, well, then for awhile. . . . How long was I home? This was 1935. What year are we now?

INTERVIEWER: We think 1934.

LUCIA: Well, I was. . . . I didn't lose any time, because I had to work. My husband was ill for seven years, you know. And after the beating in Chicago, somebody came to see me from the millinery union. They'd heard about that, you know, that a woman was beaten up. I had a lot of visitors in the hospital at that time. And she said, this girl said to me--she was a New Yorker, a vice-president from the millinery union--Lucy Oppenheim said, "Why don't you come to New York, back to. . . . Go back home, and go and see the international president, Max Zaritsky." They were looking for organizers for the West Coast. Well, I thought, "What have I got to lose? I'll go see him." I went to see him. There was something about the little man. He was such a small fellow. He was so pleasant. But, he said, "You know, we'll have

LUCIA: to have references from the Amalgamated." I says, "Well, if you're going to get references from the Amalgamated, then I'm not going to get the job." I said, "I'll tell you," I said, "Mr. Zaritsky, if you do the same thing the Amalgamated did, I'll do the same thing to you that I did to the Amalgamated." (laughs) And I picked myself up. What's the sense of going through with it? You know, all this raving and telling my experiences, and everything. He says, "Sit down, I didn't dismiss you. I kind of like that spirit it it's in the right direction." He immediately felt, I don't know what he felt. He said, "I'll tell you what, I'm going to hire you on probation. Three months probation, you'll be going to the West Coast. Before you get to the West Coast, you stop in St. Louis, you'll have a chance to address a meeting there in preparation for a strike. I'll see you in action, you know?"

INTERVIEWER: This was 1935?

LUCIA: 1935.

INTERVIEWER: This was after the merger between the hatters and the milliners?

LUCIA: Oh, yes. The bridging had taken place. And, in 1934.

INTERVIEWER: Right. And they still had the different. . . . I mean, was it fairly separate?

LUCIA: They were in separate departments.

INTERVIEWER: Departments.

LUCIA: They were separate departments, but they had kept the departments but they. . . . Oh, by the way, I attended their first convention.

INTERVIEWER: The first merger convention?

LUCIA: Yes, the first merger convention, which was in May of 1936. (pause) They hadn't met in convention at that time, you know. First, the hatters union met, and then. . . . First the United Hatters, and then the cap and millinery workers. You know, they were two separate divisions.

INTERVIEWER: So you were working with the Cap Makers' Union and--in 1935, you'd be working Cap and Millinery?

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: Yes. I was working there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you say you went out to St. Louis, and you were going to . . .

LUCIA: Oh, this is what my doctor. . . . The doctor had ordered that warm climate for my husband. The baby, by that time, was two years old. I thought this was a blessing. This was exactly what he needs. And we talked it over, and he thought it was a good idea, so I would be able to take care of Margie. I had right along. So I left in March. March the fifteenth, 1935. And the first place I stopped was--with another organizer they had hired--was in St. Louis. They had a tremendous meeting, very, very large meeting for us. In our trade a thousand people was a lot, a lot of people. And, he called on me without any warning, called on me to speak. Apparently, I must have pleased him. And I must have made a good talk. The other girl didn't want to speak. She said, "I told you when you hired me that I'm not a speaker." That almost cooked her goose from the beginning. But anyway, he said, "Now, you two girls go on to Los Angeles first. Stop in Los Angeles, and then we can work. Then I'll decide which of you is going where. One in Los Angeles, and one in San Francisco."

So, we went to Los Angeles, and when I got there, there were a number of girls from Bryn Mawr [Summer School for Women Workers]. I recognized some of the girls in the crowd, that they were communists. And I noticed that--looking all around--that they had all kinds of posters, communist posters all around. And I was supposed to say unionism, you know. I knew the hatters' union wasn't communist. What's happening around here? Anyway, I had got them started on songs, and by the time Zaritsky came, I had the people singing, and they hadn't had a strike yet. They were supposed to vote for a strike that night. And I mimeographed--they had a mimeograph machine--and right away I mimeographed some songs, and got them out. Well, it was decided--he had decided that I was going on to San Francisco and that the other girl--I've forgotten her name--was going to stay in Los Angeles. But when we met with the board after the meeting--the executive board of the Los Angeles local, they said, "No, we'd like to have Carmen stay." They said, "She right away got acquainted with the girls and we need somebody like that." So, he called and said, "For a while you're going to stay here for the strike." Okay, so I stayed for the strike and I have all the clippings on the strike there. About twelve hundred millinery workers called out on strike. It was a very, very rough strike. We had the Red Squad to contend with. I couldn't even breathe, you know, on the picket line, without being dragged into jail. And the scare of the communists. Great days. A hangover of the power of great days were still lingering in the air. You know. Which I was familiar with, on account of my brother, you know. I was familiar with. . . . I had a background that this other girl, the poor thing, didn't have. It embarrassed her. She really--she couldn't lead. She was a novice. She didn't know what the score was. She was a nice person, but she could never have taken. . . . And so, one day, the pickets called me. They said, "Carmen"--I don't know what her name is, I can't think of it. Trudeau was her last name. I'm trying to think of her first name, but--"It was Trudeau who took us off the line, she said, because the policeman told her he didn't want us on the line!" So, I thought, "She can't take it.

LUCIA: Must be good girls, if they don't want to run the line. They must be good girls." So I went to her, thinking I was doing her a favor, and I said, "Betty, Betty, don't ever do what the police tell you. Talk it over with somebody," I said. "If they begin to plea their line on the active girls, you're not going to have a picket line." Then I patiently explained why. Well, she got awfully mad. She went to Zaritsky and complained that I was meddling with her strike. And she told the stories of what happens with communist reds. He said, "By the way, you're going to stay. You're staying here. Try to teach her and I trust your judgement. You'll do it very graciously, without making her feel angry." Well, the strike was lost. People went back. The Association was very, very strong. The Millinery Manufacturers Association; it poured money in left and right.

INTERVIEWER: Is that local or national?

LUCIA: That was the Association. Each millinery center had their own association. But you know how it is. They compared notes and they'd meet each other. They knew a victory in one place would mean a victory in another. I don't remember what the cause was but it was the beginning of the NRA. Section 7 of the NRA had begun to appear in the newspapers. Somebody--Englander was the hearing officer. We had a Labor Board hearing. We went to the Labor Board. I can't remember now whether they ordered reinstatement, but I doubt it. In those days, it wasn't strong enough to get reinstatement of the people; there were too many anyway. The thing was, the strike was lost. We tried to get as many people back as possible, so we'd have enough importance, so Zaritsky said, "Well, I'll have to send you to San Francisco."

INTERVIEWER: In 1935 Los Angeles was still pretty much an anti-union town. It was really an open shop town.

LUCIA: Los Angeles? Los Angeles was the most vicious anti-union town you ever met. The mayor and everybody. And they all worked together, you know. And with the Red Squad and Chamber of Commerce. The editorials that appeared. There might be some amongst my clippings. In any event, it was a very hostile town! The ILG [International Ladies Garment Workers] gave us a hand, by the way. We always were friendlier with the ILG. For some unknown reason, wherever we went, we chose to work with the ILG, rather than the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. I don't know why, but that's the way it happened. It might have been--but I don't know whether they fight in New York on the political front. I'm not familiar with that because I wasn't near there, but before the Liberal Party was born, there was another political organization.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. It was the American Labor Party?

LUCIA: American Labor Party. Yes, during that period, it might have been, I don't know. But I wasn't familiar with what was going on in New York. Don't forget that the year I lived in. . . . I lived

LUCIA: one year in New York with my husband. We were on relief. And, you know, it was a very bad time for me. . . . And he was in the hospital most of the time. And I had an operation when I was seven months pregnant. And, by the way, Hilda Smith--I'm going back again--was responsible for my getting all the medical care free of charge in the hospital, you know? She knew all kinds of people. So, I don't forget. When I got out of the hospital, and I was called to go to the office, there were no bills. Where am I going to get the money? Anyway . . .

INTERVIEWER: You were saying that after the strike was defeated in Los Angeles, you went up to San Francisco.

LUCIA: Yes. San Francisco.

INTERVIEWER: It was more of a pro-union town.

LUCIA: They had just got over the general strike. Wasn't that in 1936?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I think so. 1936.

LUCIA: I think in 1936, they had just got over the general strike. Couldn't have been 1935. Yes, it must have been 1935. I should have put all those dates down. See, that's what I tried to do, but I only finished this. You have no idea what chaos this was all in. It was thrown in a heap. (Refers to clippings) It took a long, long time to do that. And some of them got cut up, and I didn't know what belonged in which place, and so forth. Well, I found that San Francisco. . . . I was told to concentrate on millinery people. I had pretty good luck in San Francisco. The people were of a different type and variety. San Francisco had already had--they had the general strike and they knew of the union. It's an old union town. And the Aquapoleys had been mayor. They were very active at one time on the West Coast. In fact, Walter Kaum, one of the founding members that I met, he was with the Waiters' Union, I think, at the time, you know. And he was very helpful. And then Hugo Ernst, who was the international president of the hotel and restaurant people, the man that I was telling you about before. He became our godfather. He took a liking to me, and you know, he wanted to help me. So, I had very good success. And then probably in about six months, I was able to notify the office, in New York, that I had a majority in all of the shops, I think there were about thirteen shops. Now, only the girls, I mean only the boys. . . . I felt that I could pull out the blockers who were the main workers in the shop. Key people. I could pull out the men. The girls couldn't work anyway. So, I didn't have too much luck. I had enough girls, but . . . (pause)
So, I had trouble with the San Francisco Labor Council. They were having interior fights. Now, Eric Richards was, you know, very

LUCIA: active. I didn't care for him, by the way. And then he got fired, afterwards with them. I admired what he had done, but I didn't admire some of his tactics. He tried the people who had helped him.
But this Vandermoor, who was head of the San Francisco Labor Council, tried to speak for our union. Every time I'd make an announcement, of course, he counteracted it. So, I didn't like it, you know. I didn't know at the time that Eric Richards didn't like him either, and that he had quite an opposition against him. It turned out that Eric Richards was right in this instance. And so, I got up one time at the board at the San Francisco Labor Council. I immediately made myself a delegate, you know, to the Council. Oh, it was a beautiful time. What speeches I heard in that San Francisco Labor Council, I'll never forget. There were real beautiful speeches. It was like a forum, you know. You had to. . . . You learned so much from all of them. And then they had Jenny Matyas, who was the vice-president of the international union of the ILG. She was the international vice-president and she was tremendous. A very wonderful person.

INTERVIEWER: Matties?

LUCIA: Matyas. Charters, now, her name is. M-A-T-Y-A-S. She was Jenny Matyas, a little bit of a thing, but she was full of dynamite. She represented the ILG. She was from the West Coast. I think, I mean, she's been out of the organization for a long, long time. She retired.

INTERVIEWER: You say that you were successful in San Francisco organizing?

LUCIA: Yes, organizing. I'm sorry. I've deviated. So, I decided that the strike would be called now. According to our international union constitution, we would have to get consent from the international union. I thought, "If I call them up and tell them I'm going to call a strike on the day after Labor Day, I'm going to be in trouble. They won't give it to me. I can't hold them." So, I took a chance. I called a strike, and I was hoping that. . . . I said to the men, "Don't let the women in." And then what women I did have, I told them, "Don't let them in," you know. We had eleven shops then, maybe, involving about five or six hundred people. They were small shops. And, so in the morning, Vandermoor heard about it. He got on and he made a speech at the Labor Council, that I had no right to call a strike, that I didn't get any okay from the international union, and that they weren't going to respect our picket line. So, it meant that the deliveries would go through, so I said to our girls, "Don't let the deliveries go through." And these were all in buildings, you know, huge buildings. They were not to enter the buildings. But they knew what to do anyway. And so, soon as the strike was called, I had them all out. Except one factory. And the manufacturer called me. He said, "You know, Miss Lucia, all the shops are out, and I don't know what to do with my people." I said, "Send them over here!" (laughs) He said, "What do you mean?" But he was very naive. And he said, "Will you promise to send them back?" I said,

LUCIA: "Sure, if they want to go back, sure, I'll be glad to send them back." The strike lasted four days. You know why? Because in the meantime, I wired Zaritsky. In those days, they didn't use the telephone like they did later on, you know. And I wired, and he wired back, and he didn't reprimand me. He said that he was delighted, and he hoped I was successful. Four days later I wired and told him what the results were and what we got. We did pretty good! The union shop, at that time, had not been forbidden. Later on it was. And we got a closed-union shop. So that was a success in San Francisco. Now San Francisco then served as a place for me to work, and operate out of. So I had time on my hands. Oh, well, then I worked on the cap makers, and I got the cap makers. And the hatters were separate, separate departments. They were in separate shops. I had to go up to the hatters. I had the hardest time with the hatters because they said, "If you were sent by Bill Green, we don't want any part of it." Bill Green used to be their representative. Not Bill Green--Michael Green.

INTERVIEWER: Michael Green?

LUCIA: Michael Green. I said, "No, he didn't send me." I said, "Max Zaritsky sent me," and they didn't even know Max Zaritsky from a hole in the wall. But you know, we've merged now. I had to overcome that and got them. So, then I had time on my hands, you know. I wasn't active very much. So one day, a young girl, Miriam Fromm, came to see me. She was with the five-and-ten cent store girls. The warehousemen's union had been on strike, and she didn't go in. She wanted to respect the picket line. And she and several other girls were fired when the warehousemen settled their strike, and they couldn't get Marion back, which I thought was pretty bad, you know. They could have, specially because they were supposed to be. . . . Eric Richard's fight. So, she came to see me, and I said, What do you want me to do?" She said, "Well, you've been so successful, maybe you can help us. If you've got time." Time is what I had. She said, "Could you help us in the five-and-tens?" I said, "Sure, get a leaflet out." I used to love to get out leaflets. By the way, I have those for you, a bunch of them.

INTERVIEWER: Let's get this straight. Now, she was . . .

LUCIA: She was just a girl who had worked in the five-and-ten who had . . .

INTERVIEWER: And the warehousemen were on strike?

LUCIA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you said Eric Richard's friend?

LUCIA: She, herself, was--later on I found out--wasn't so far removed, either. "Sure," I said, "Let's get a leaflet out and use the millinery workers' headquarters." We did have a pretty nice hall in San Francisco. Well, we called a meeting, and we had about

LUCIA: fifty people the first time. Well, I said, "Let's do it right. Let's let them. . . ." I said, "There's how many stores? Let's get the big stores. Not only the five-and-tens, but let's go up to the big shots." So the first week--I don't know whether I have the first week of pamphlets and leaflets, but I, somewhere I have it. We got about fifty people. Some from each. So we signed them up and we began that campaign. By September--this was in spring, I think, or it was summer--by September of that same year, we had--we were sufficiently strong to ask for union recognition.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of union was this for?

LUCIA: The international?

INTERVIEWER: Retailers' Department [Union] strike?

LUCIA: They were the old AF of L. Doc Dyspepsia we used to call him. Joe Pricept was the president of the international. Oh, they had a long list of names. I've got it somewhere. But it was the only AF of L union. I think now, I think it's defunct. I don't think, maybe. . . . Don't they still have two retail clerk's unions?

INTERVIEWER: The ICIA, then there's the R.D.U.

LUCIA: Clerk's Protective Association. That was the one. And boy, were they. . . . And, in the meantime, I wanted some applications, union applications, before that meeting. So they said, "You have to ask." I couldn't get it from anybody. They did have it at a local there, but they wouldn't give me any applications. So, I wired, using funds from the milliners, which was very nice of them, to send me some applications. Give me a thousand applications. It must have scared the hell out of them. And they said, "Send us fifty dollars, and we'll send it to you." You know what I did? I took one of them, and I mimeographed two thousand or something, saying, "Give us the time to help us help them." And we were signed up by that time. We had signed up about two thousand. Then came the fight in the Council. Now, when I first started this, I said, "I'm going to organize this first, you know." And I said, "I don't want any fight. I don't want anybody to tell me I want this piece and that piece, because I'm going to have an industrial union. That's the only way I'm going to organize." You know, we tried, all the time we tried. So when they finally saw us making progress, then they began to bellyache in the Council that I was sticking them in the retail clerk's. Including the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, which infuriated me that they wanted the--what do you call them?--the alteration names. Because if anybody believed in industrial unions, it was Sidney Hillman. I've got a copy of a letter somewhere around here that I wrote to Petofsky or somebody about forgetting what he stands for, its principles, and so forth. Well, Hugh Ernst, who represented the Hotel and Restaurant Union, he was the international president. He said, "Carmen, I want to help

LUCIA: you. I want to get up on the floor at the federation meeting. I want to be the first union to decide that we're not going to break up the principle of industrial unionism." Because they had lunchrooms in all the stores, you know. You can have them in your union. So, I had to be given a title. It was without pay, by the way. Official advisor is what they called me, mostly. Official advisor. So, we kept building and building and finally we got to the point where Jack Shelley--he was the president of the state [labor] federation, he was on our most central body--and I addressed a meeting. Now when it came to calling a strike there, we didn't have the funds that.... I knew the protective association wouldn't want a strike anyway. And he didn't want one. He said, "I'm going to speak against it because they're not going to respect your picket line." I said, "Oh, yes they will." So we did and we called in the defence and sure enough, I got the people to respect the picket line. And I said to the Barber's Association, the people, the ones that said they weren't going to respect our picket line, I said, "I'll tell the girls to go after your girls--because they would--and you'll be sorry." So anyway, to make a long story short, I got an understanding with the warehousemen's union. By the way, Miriam . . .

INTERVIEWER: Fromm?

LUCIA: Yes, then began to assert herself. And she was a young girl, and she began to be helpful, too. She wasn't a speaker or anything, but she mingled with the people; she was quite helpful. I wanted to have anybody, any contribution that they made. Well, anyway, when I come to that point, I'll explain why. So the strike was called and the warehousemen hadn't accepted a promise from the warehouse union but they were going to cross the line unless we made it very hard. "But you have to make it very hard for us because we have a clause in the agreement which says we cannot respect certain barriers or picket lines." So, I said to the girls, "When the warehousemen go in, go in after them." They had high heels in those days, and they would go after them and hit them on the head with the high heels! I couldn't explain to the girls that it was a deal I had with the warehousemen's union. So when the warehousemen were going to the stores, they said, "We can't beat the hell out of those girls, because if they were men, you know, we could fight back, but what could we do to girls who use their high heels and all kinds of things?" So they helped us. And they had to. For four days, that strike lasted for four days. And we had to think up the clippings--million-dollar baby and all that stuff. Well, that was later when the department store--this was only the department stores. There were thirty-seven stores. Then we went after the variety stores, which were the five-and-tens, and the other stores, small stores. And there we had a wonderful picnic and . . .

INTERVIEWER: And the strike lasted four days?

LUCIA: Yes. I know we got a good contract, except.... The difference I had with Shelley, who was the president of the Central Labor

LUCIA: Union--we both attended the meeting. Well, I attended every meeting; anyway, I spoke at every meeting--was that he wouldn't.... I'm sorry. I'm all mixed up. The strike didn't occur at that.... We settled without a strike at the department stores union. The four days was with the next group. The four day strike was with the five-and-tens. This one in the department store union, which involved about thirty-seven or fifty-seven--I don't know, I forgot--all the major stores in the city. It was a fight between me and Shelley as to who could manage to . . . (break in tape)

INTERVIEWER: . . . one in San Francisco. First, you organized a successful strike with the . . .

LUCIA: Millinery workers. About eleven shops.

INTERVIEWER: Then, of course, when times were dull, you went to organize the retail department store workers. And the first thing was the department store strike. Not the strike but the vote to organize.

LUCIA: Organizing.

INTERVIEWER: That's right, organizing.

LUCIA: But the night that they were supposed to vote on the contract, I wanted to hold out. We had settled on everything but the closed shop question. And I thought, "Without a closed shop, they're going to...." By that time the right to work law, I think, was in effect, I don't remember just . . .

INTERVIEWER: Well, it wouldn't be that, it'd be something else.

LUCIA: An open shop, you know, is always very difficult. You can't keep your members; they replace them, there's no way you can keep them in. So we had a battle royal; he'd take the floor and I'd take the floor, but you know, after all, he was the president and to the central block. So he won out. And they accepted the contract. And the next day, we started to work on the . . .

INTERVIEWER: Five-and-tens?

LUCIA: . . .the five-and-tens. Then in a short period of time, we were able to get Chinatown. We had China posters, Chinese posters, and so forth. Then, I decided I would take the bull by the horns. There were only about four or five hundred workers. And we were going to try to get a union shop there if we could. That's when I had to deal with the warehousemen, by the way, for the four days that they wouldn't deliver, wouldn't make any deliveries, because.... This warehouse in San Francisco furnished its material to the whole West Coast area. So, it was very important to us to get the help of the warehousemen's union, which we had gotten. Well, when the strike took place, and they couldn't get merchandise, you see, they had to settle. And the morning that

LUCIA: I had to pull the picket line off the line--I didn't want to leave it unmanned--I asked Hugo Ernst and some of the friends I had in the movement to replace the pickets with some of their people--while we were holding our meeting. It was on Friday the thirteenth, 1936 or 1937--1936--and so, when the girls came--and most of them were girls--they came in and asked what all the excitement was about. Nobody had told them at this meeting that we had had a conference the day before, and we're going to give them a report. And I told the committee that had sat in with me, "Don't mention it to the girls. Let's surprise them." So, when they came in, I said, "How many of you are superstitious about Friday the thirteenth?" Well, all the hands went up. Well, I said, "This is one Friday the thirteenth that you won't ever forget. We got the union shop," because that was the only thing that we were fighting for, and we had settled on the rest of the things. Then pandemonium broke loose. They began to sing and to shout and stamp their feet and cry and what have you; just all the human emotions imaginable. It was a beautiful moment. And the next Wednesday, we had a meeting of Local 1100, which was the--embraced all of the five-and-tens and the other stores. I had the girls all dressed up in white saddle shoes. I had them in the back room, waiting for them to come in. "When I give them the signal from the platform you come in singing 'We Shall Not Be Moved'," you know. That time we looked just like a tree that's planted by the water; it was one of our favorite songs. And they came in singing and it was a beautiful sight for me. It shamed the department store union that didn't have the guts to stick up for the same thing, the same principle. So that was the department store. Then, you know, I had dental work. Even bank tellers came to ask me if I would help them. And I did. So I kept going, you know.

INTERVIEWER: How were you living? Who was paying for all this?

LUCIA: The millinery.

INTERVIEWER: Millinery?

LUCIA: The millinery people were paying me. And Zaritsky said, "I get more letters of protest from everybody that you're invading their unions." You know, the worst ones was from the doll workers. They were . . .

INTERVIEWER: The what?

LUCIA: The Toy and Doll Makers Union. They're a racketeer outfit, anyway. So,"We'll take your girl out for a ride if she doesn't stop trying to organize us." So where did I go before that and after that?
While I was in San Francisco, I was having marital trouble. Although he was ill, I had gotten it [the job] and he had followed me, you know, to San Francisco. It took no time at all, you know, for me to make the money up and bring my daughter and him. Just lovely for me because he needed it. And I kept him all this.... Well, anyway, this marital thing doesn't enter into it. We didn't get

LUCIA: along. And I was having trouble; granted, I was too busy making love to the union. (laughs) So, I was given an ultimatum. He hadn't found a job yet. I had to continue to work. So, I thought by that time he'd get me out of the movement. So, I call Zaritsky up. No, Zaritsky called me up, timely, right opportune with.... He said, "Our organizer was beaten up in Dallas, Texas"--I think it was in 1936 or 1937--"so we need to get us a strike there and we need you very badly." So I went. And if you remember that era--or do you know anything about that time?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes.

LUCIA: All the beatings, and the tar and feathering, and the Ku Klux Klan, the goon squad; the Ford goon squad--the CIO was being formed and all that.

INTERVIEWER: I lived in Minneapolis a couple of years, hanging around the Teamsters and packinghouse workers, who had been around during that period, 1934. But Dallas was really bad.

LUCIA: Oh, tough; oh, it was terrible.

INTERVIEWER: Is that where . . .

LUCIA: I spent years in Dallas.

INTERVIEWER: That was your first time in the South? You had never been in the South?

LUCIA: I had never been in the South. No, I had never been in the South, because Atlanta was after that. But that was my first experience. And somehow I didn't consider it the South, like the deep South, you know, Texas. And the first thing I did was talk to the strikers, get acquainted with them, go on the picket line with them. Now, the strike had been called--it was a general strike called after George Baer--B-A-E-R--our organizer there had been beaten up by the goon squad, the Ford goon squad, as we called it. We didn't know what else to call it, because they were hired by the Ford people, you see. And the auto workers were trying to organize the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

LUCIA: And so the reason why they beat up George Baer, was that he was the kind that never went to the AF of L, to tell them, "I'm here in town and I'm doing organization work...." And while I had the same opinion of the AF of L almost, seeing as how they were too slow for me, I always paid my respects when I went to town, to let them know if they wanted any help, that I was always available, that way. And on top of that, our international president, Max Zaritsky, was one of eight AF of L people who, in a convention, had chosen to stand up for industrial unionism. So between Max Zaritsky being homey as an individual, not as the union, being associated with that interior fight, we were branded

LUCIA: CIO. And, of course, the goons thought, "We ought to get after everybody who was sympathetic with the CIO." So, we were trying to negotiate with . . .

INTERVIEWER: So there was an auto plant in Dallas, a Ford plant in Dallas, that has a Ford--what do they call it? A service department--that has a Ford service department?

LUCIA: Is that what it was? I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's what they called it.

LUCIA: I know it was Ford but I didn't know . . .

INTERVIEWER: So they beat up Baer because . . .

LUCIA: Now, the goons that were hired, you see, Ford had hired ex-convicts . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: . . . to be put on the payroll to be the muscle men in the fight for--against organization. And we were--we had been conducting--I wasn't there--but the organizers had been conducting a campaign in the millinery plants. And the strike had been called. No, the strike was called afterwards. As a result of the beating, the workers who had joined the union were incensed and outraged at the beating that the man had gotten and they decided then to go on strike, with the help of the international union, of course. Oh, you don't want to hear about the fight, about George Baer's beating. Do you want to hear about . . .

INTERVIEWER: No.

LUCIA: No, because . . .

INTERVIEWER: But I do want to hear about these workers, though. About these workers in Dallas. There were millinery workers, men, women, white, black, Chicano . . .

LUCIA: Who? Our workers?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: No, they were Anglo-Saxon, most of them were Anglo-Saxons.

INTERVIEWER: Most of them men, or women, or both?

LUCIA: Men and women.

INTERVIEWER: And most of them native Southerners?

LUCIA: Oh, yes, most of them. We had very few.... Did I get through with.... Yes, I did get through with the strike in Los Angeles, didn't I?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes.

LUCIA: I did do that. Oh, there we had Mexicans, quite a number of Mexicans in that particular strike, yes.

INTERVIEWER: That was the one that was won?

LUCIA: So, what happened was that when they came out on strike, we didn't get a majority of them out on strike. There again, they had a very vicious state law for the right to work. Oh, it was very vicious, worse than any of the other.... Superceded, by the way, by the federal one. And then we had a few.... No, I don't think there were any Negroes. I'm trying to think. Oh, that was millinery, a different time. Anyway, what happened was that during the day some of the people would picket, and we didn't know that, we didn't take the picket lines at night, you know, we just assumed that nobody would work, didn't man them. They'd picket during the day and go scab at night, a good many of the men. We didn't know that, you know. And so, of course, it killed the strike, because when the men go to work in millinery, you know, they're your key people. The other, the sewing, is incidental machine work. So we lost the strike.

INTERVIEWER: And these are people without any union tradition and no history of unionism?

LUCIA: No. Without what?

INTERVIEWER: Without a history of unionism.

LUCIA: No. They didn't know. Unions were very new in Dallas. And they had had very little organization work in any of the industries. Even the Amalgamated didn't.... It had a little bit but they never did make any progress. And the ILG, up to a few years ago, had to abandon whatever success they had had. So, it's still not easy, even today, it's still not easy to organize. So then, we had to call off the strike. That's when I was called in. That's when I was called in from where I was. That was when George Baer had been beaten up. That's why we lost the strike, too, because it wouldn't have happened. They didn't know that the others were there, you know. They were fairly new. So I was called in at the tail end when they had to send the people back. In fact, it was at the first meeting I had attended, that Zaritsky had announced that we had to abandon the strike. And there was no way. All we could do was to file complaints and charges but there was no use in continuing the strike because.... So, of course, there was wholesale blacklisting, you know, you couldn't get a job. Where was the last place you worked? Well, the moment they'd mention--they knew that there was a union strike, yeah, even if they didn't participate. If they were unemployed, it meant that they must have participated. So, I inherited a strike that had already been lost, because it was the day that I arrived. It was the day after Labor Day, too. I remember, because I met Bill Green with Zaritsky down in the coffee shop

LUCIA: down in the hotel, and he said, "Now, you try to get as many back as you can." None of the employers would talk to me, I was a total stranger, and so I decided, "Well, something has to be done. Who can I talk to?" And I went to see clergymen; one denomination after another. I thought, "I've got these people on my hands," and there was no relief in sight in those days. If there was, I didn't know about it--no place they could get any help. So we went from one denomination to another, each of them passing the buck. Well, you know, "After all, we have both the union and non-union, and we can't afford to take sides." But it wasn't such a question of taking sides. "I'm giving you the whole history. You can't say they're right or wrong, just get some of our people back, so that they won't be starving." You know, each one would send us to the next denomination; "Have you seen so-and-so and so-and-so?" So, finally somebody was coming back from China--I got all that down somewhere--China, who was supposed to be a saint and did missionary work. He was a former Texan, and had been in China for a couple of years. They were lauding his work and so forth. And I thought, "I'm going to see Dr. Truitt anyway." And he welcomed me warmly and said he's sympathetic but he said, "I know Texas enough to know that we'd be injuring our own cause." He was honest, at least. "The support of the church comes from the well-to-do, who are industrialists." I said, "Well, that isn't what Christ would say, if I had gone to see him; he'd chase them out of the temple." (laughs) I said, "He'd chase the money lenders out of the temple." Well, it didn't do me a bit of good. He says, "Have you seen the Catholics, yet?" So the last one I saw--I saw the rabbi, too, but he was between the devil and the deep blue sea, because most of their employers were Jewish--then I went to a Catholic and he said, "Why don't you put it all down on paper, as you told it to me? It's a very convincing story. It might have some value. Why don't you publish some kind of report?" Which I did--it's in my files here--and I said, "Who should I send it to?" "Send it to lawyers, prominent people, and so forth, clergymen, and maybe you might get some help that way." Well, I thought it was a good idea and I got it out, and printed it. And I watched my language very carefully. And I mailed out about a thousand copies. One response. One response I got: "We don't need people like you." (laughs) Just one! And then I got.... I thought I'd try the women's clubs. They had some business and professional women's clubs--the League of Women Voters. They gave me a wonderful reception. They kept me there for hours after I got through, because this holy man that came from China, that was involved in segregating--there's so much prostitution in Dallas, that they wanted to separate them and make a separate division, you know, "Let's put them in a red light district." So I said to him when I went to see him, "Why don't you ask me why they're prostituting and I'll tell you. If you get seven dollars week, you can't do anything else but sell your body in order to live and how do you expect to have any respect for the soul if the body is sick?" So, I made that kind of talk to the women. So I incurred their curiosity and they got a little kind of publicity from it, but no action, no action at all. So then, Dallas.... I'm trying to think when we had another strike, but that I think was years later. Did we finish with San Francisco?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. With Zaritsky--you were having marital problems . . .

LUCIA: Of course, we had a number of strikes in San Francisco in the millinery. It didn't happen all together at one time, you know.

INTERVIEWER: But what happened when you were at.... Well, how long.... Let's see, you went to Dallas in 1936?

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you there?

LUCIA: I left in 1939.

INTERVIEWER: So it was three years?

LUCIA: I went back to Chicago. You know, I think I'm mixing it up.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, you want to know about the union, what it says about you in the book. Wait a minute . . . (break in tape)

LUCIA: Let's go back to where I left off, because I've forgotten by this time.

INTERVIEWER: We were talking about Dallas--Dallas and Baer being beaten and then you came in having to try to get these people back to their jobs, get some of them back to work.

LUCIA: Yes, and then I went to see Reverend Truitt.

INTERVIEWER: Reverend Truitt?

LUCIA: Yes. He had just come back from China. And I got the pamphlet and I got one response, which was negative at that. And what happened?

INTERVIEWER: This was in 1937 and 1938?

LUCIA: In 1939 I went back to Dallas. Well, there was nothing I could.... Oh, they had the hearing, the hearing lasted a long time, the Labor Board hearing on that case, because it involved all the beatings that took place in that era, which was the period of 1935. Then in 1939.... What did I do between then and 1937? Oh, I went to Chicago. I was in Chicago trying to organize. I had a call from Zaritsky that they wanted to organize. Then after this.... Of course, in 1939 I was in Dallas again, but not for the milliners. I was for the.... (pause)

INTERVIEWER: Let me go back. You say you were in Dallas.

LUCIA: You see, July 20th, I was back in . . .

INTERVIEWER: Dallas?

LUCIA: Back in Garland, Texas.

INTERVIEWER: So (inaudible) like in 1936 and 1937, you were in Dallas, there was a strike . . .

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: . . . the beating, and there was the Labor Board hearing and then after that you went to Chicago. And then you were there for a while. Who were you working for up there?

LUCIA: For the milliners.

INTERVIEWER: For the milliners.

LUCIA: Oh yeah. No, after that I was always with the milliners until I quit.

INTERVIEWER: And then, in 1939, you came back to Texas . . .

LUCIA: Texas, and that was the Resistol strike in Garland, Texas. (long blank in tape--ruffling of papers) Well, as a result, a young man, Arvil Inge, who came out of the millinery strike--you know, I trained him to be an organizer.

INTERVIEWER: Orville?

LUCIA: Arvil, A-R-V-I-L, Inge, I-N-G-E. He developed very well. He's no longer with us, he's with the Chemical Workers Union. Oh, but he was left--after I left the millinery situation there--he was left to take charge. And somebody came to him from the Resistol Hat Company, and said that they wanted to be organized. So he notified the international about it. "Renewal of Hatter's Union Efforts Seen"[newspaper headline]--and he sent me down to see what could be done. He had already had one meeting with the people and he was under the impression that he had full control of them. Well, I took his word for it. So we called a strike. And I think he meant well. It was my fault as much as it was his. Well, the way I'm saying it, it sounds as though I'm trying to blame him. I don't mean that at all. He was a very fine person. The morning of the strike, you see.... The building was way, way inside in private property. So, in order to get there you had to trespass. So, I got there real early and I got on the platform and I had a loud speaker. And I kept telling the people to go out and we'll have a meeting. I was having good luck. They were all turning back and going out and I said to Arvil, "Arvil, you catch them as they come out and hold them so we could bring them to the headquarters." Well, we couldn't get headquarters, nobody would give us a meeting place. It was a little bit of a town. Nobody wanted us. So he said, "We'll go to the park." There was a park nearby. And while I was talking and having luck, Mr. Whatever-his-name-was, the employer, Mr. Rolnick came. He got on the platform with me, (laughs) both of us screaming at the top of our voice. "Don't listen to this woman. She'll get you in trouble. All she cares about is your dues. She's taking your job." And so

LUCIA: forth. Well, the voice of the boss is always louder, so we didn't get as many people as we had hoped. We got the sanction from the international for the strike. And we would have continued to strike. But, they were ill-prepared for it. They listened enough. You see, in organization work, it's very important while you're doing the organizing work to prepare them for the eventuality of a strike and what it would mean. You know, point out all the hazards and the risks that they take and then they're prepared for it, you see. Well, of course, I didn't have time. I arrived there the day before. So they weren't prepared for it. They had wished us well, they'd go to the picket line and say, "I hope you succeed, good luck!" (laughs) That's one thing, on the picket line, though, I never lose my temper. I could be the sweetest person to someone because I always feel that someday I'm going to have to talk to that person, that individual. So even the scabs--and I hate them like poison--it was an effort to be nice to them, but I made it a point to be nice to them. So we lost the strike. And then there were labor board cases, and we tried to get our people reinstated. We got some of them reinstated to a certain extent, but the town was against us. This little bit of a town, which, by the way, has grown into a suburb. It's the largest suburb, now, of Dallas. And the only factory that was in there was a pickle factory. You can imagine the hat factory that employed about, I would say, maybe about two hundred people, maybe they look like two hundred now, I don't know. But at least 100 to 150 people. It was the largest factory that they had, the main source of income. You couldn't blame them, in a way, you know. And he had threatened, he had come--the Resistol fellow--had come from Orange, New Jersey. He left Orange, New Jersey to get out of the union. And here the union was after him again. So he fought us tooth and nail. And then one of our vice-presidents--what was his name? Finkelstein--he was a very good orator. He was with me. But he stayed outside and I stayed in line. Not because he was afraid or anything. Oh, no. He was a great big guy, he could've murdered somebody. (laughs) But he had to be kept intact so that if the boss wanted to talk to somebody, they could say, "Well, there's a neutral person." So I did all the dirty work on the picket line, you know. To go in there, every time I tried to go in--you could see that the place where we used to meet in the park . . .

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's in the picture.

LUCIA: And then here's where they stopped me, they told me that I was trespassing and they'd arrest me, and so forth and so on. And so, one of the men, who was a guard there, came over and said, "Miss Lucia, I recognize you, you're a union woman. These people mean business. If you try to advance one more foot, they're ordered to shoot you, because you're trespassing. So, I want to advise you to leave." Well, I finally believed him. I didn't want to be shot! (laughs) And I said, "I don't care . . . (blank on tape)

INTERVIEWER: Tape number three.

LUCIA: Finkelstein, he was the vice-president of the international union, and well, I was, too. He got a letter from Rolnick, the employer--no, he got a letter from the Chamber of Commerce of Garland--saying that they wanted to have this whole,... Are you alright?

INTERVIEWER: I'm fine.

LUCIA: . . . this whole matter straightened out and they wanted to invite the public to hear both sides at one time, to have a full discussion and debates on the fairgrounds. Zaritsky was of the opinion that this couldn't happen again to another one of our men. But, I said, "I'm going, too. If you're going, I'm going, too." I wasn't going to miss something that was going to be dramatic. And the head of the NLRB was a friend of ours. He had been involved in the Labor Board cases, and so forth. He called us up. He said, "Miss Lucia, I want to talk to your colleague." They knew me better than him because I had been before the Board. He says, "Your colleague." And they talked to Finkelstein. And he says, "I'm going to ask you not to go." "Well, we can't say we don't want to go, because they'll think we're afraid." He said, "I don't care. You can just tell them that I said so, and if you don't think that's enough, I'll call them and tell them I forbid you to go, because we're going to have a hearing in a couple of days and I don't want anything to happen that would interfere with the hearings." So that's how we got out of it. But that morning, we slipped out before he--well, he called us that very day but, I mean, the night before--but that morning we sent people out to scout around in Garland to see what the atmosphere was. It was just like a picnic, selling hot dogs and balloons. They had all kinds of people, but a couple of the labor men we sent out were listening to the discussion: "Just let him show his face, let them show their faces, and we'll kill them off." So they knew there were plans to beat somebody up. So we didn't have the meeting. And the result was that we lost the strike anyway. We couldn't get anything. They didn't want to offer it and we didn't want to sign a sweetheart contract. So they wouldn't let it go. And people--we got the people back as much as we could and that's that. Now, I don't want to go into the Resistol, because twenty-five years later we picked this up. I think it was twenty-five years later. 1958, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you finally got one?

LUCIA: No, we went back to get them. But we didn't go back to him, we went back when we heard that he was moving another of his plants from the East. They didn't know where to locate it. They knew it was in Texas, but didn't know where. One day I was going through Texas, you know, in my various work. And I stopped in this little town because there was a sign, Antique Shop, and I was crazy about antiques. And while I was there, I saw the local paper. It said,"Byer Rolnick to Locate Here." (laughs) As if it were made especially for me. So I stopped in the antique show and bought the paper and went to see somebody in the labor movement.

LUCIA: And he said, "Yes, the shop is opening up here." So I sent word to the office. And about six months later, the shop was full of people and we started a little organizing. And we had luck, we had luck. He got out all the clippings that I'm showing you here. He had them enlarged and he put them.... I had a colleague, John Coolidge, who was very nice and very, very helpful to me. I hope I'm not creating the impression that I'm the only one that's involved. Do you want names of the others?

INTERVIEWER: Only when they're important, I think.

LUCIA: What?

INTERVIEWER: When they're important.

LUCIA: Because I--you know, well, yes, in this case, I think he should be mentioned because he did really, he always worked with me. But they got the posters out saying, "This is what happened twenty-five years ago. The same woman trying to organize us, and she's still around," you know. When I was passing out leaflets, the boss came out--Mr. Rolnick came out--and he said, "Are you still around?" I said, "I could say the same thing to you!" (laughs) Well, he gave us a battle. Now, down in Texas--Longview, Texas, this was in Longview, Texas--it was a very small town but they had some pretty good people in the labor movement. I went there to get acquainted with the labor movement and they said they would help us. And we started to organize a campaign. Our method of campaign--home to home visiting--takes a long time, but I think it's worthwhile getting a nucleus inside the shop that is so convinced that they want to help. That's another way of doing it--in fact, one of the main ways of doing it. Home to home visiting is very tiresome but we used to see two, three, or four in the night, depending on how much we had to work to get their card. And getting their cards was not enough, because we found out that signing union cards was not enough. The real test is when the election is held. Because the moment the election is announced by the labor board is when the employer really begins to turn the heat on, makes speeches and what have you, switches people around, makes a good many of the foremen and floor ladies regular workers so that they couldn't vote and so forth. So, well, we won that election, by a substantial majority. They went to the board, they challenged the election. And the board ruled them out--this takes years, you know. I'm saying it in two minutes but it takes years. And finally they ruled. Well, in the meantime, while we were waiting for the decision from the labor board, we went back to the original shop and got his people. So we had them at Longview, we were going to Garland.... (pause) Well, anyway, I thought they had at least three places at that time. Anyway, we got, finally, after years of.... No strike, there was no strike there. The first strike was over here, and the other two we won through the labor board, leafletting and continuing visiting them. So, of course, we got a pretty good contract. And it's still union now.

INTERVIEWER: In 1958 was that?

LUCIA: I think so. About 1958, yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's almost twenty years.

LUCIA: Why, it means this is 1939, still 1939. Yeah, this is 1958, because this is 1961 already: "Union Begins Talks with Byer Rolnick"-1960. "Union Lives, Byer Rolnick." "Hatter's Wins NLRB. Election at Resistol"-that's in 1960. So you see, it took years to get it accomplished. It's not as easy as.... Now, that takes care of the Resistol.

INTERVIEWER: I want to talk about Atlanta.

LUCIA: You want to go to Atlanta? Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Well, is that what happened after your loss at Resistol in 1939?

LUCIA: Yeah. (pause) Dallas? I've got some Atlanta stuff here. Dallas. Chicago. I see because they happen to be on the same page. Now, Atlanta? Did you know.... No, but.... We're not there yet.

INTERVIEWER: Nope, we haven't even gotten up to World War II, yet.

LUCIA: Oh, DeKalb. I'm mixed up. It's DeKalb, I thought it was DeKalb, Illinois, but there's a DeKalb, Georgia.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes.

LUCIA: And that's when I was--joined the protest about Herman Talmadge being made governor.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so that's when he was governor, in 1949?

LUCIA: So I joined the protesters when I was in DeKalb, who were protesting the election. (pause in tape) I'm getting too old to remember all these things! Oh, this is when I got arrested in Dallas. I got the protest from the . . .

INTERVIEWER: In 1941?

LUCIA: . . . toilet workers union that I was trespassing in their jurisdiction.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about how you got to Atlanta.

LUCIA: Hmm?

INTERVIEWER: Why did you go to Atlanta? Did Zaritsky send you?

LUCIA: Yeah, Zaritsky sends me all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get another phone call from Zaritsky?

LUCIA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: He said, "There's another bad strike?"

LUCIA: Well, nobody else wanted to go. I was the only dang fool that wanted to go in. And none of the other organizers wanted to go in the South, you know. But then, I didn't have.... All of them had a base of operation. I didn't have a base of operation. I never had a local with my strength, with members behind me, you know what I mean? I'd go from one place to another. In 1940, that was the.... I was sent--in 1940--I was in Chicago when I got a call from Zaritsky that I was needed in Atlanta, Georgia. It'd be a question of a few weeks.

INTERVIEWER: You were in Dallas in 1937, around the general strike that was beaten. And then you had the Resistol thing and then you went to Chicago; or do you remember, were you back and forth? I know you moved around a lot.

LUCIA: I'm getting mixed up myself.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: I tell you what--I went to Chicago twice.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so then after . . .

LUCIA: Chicago, oh, I mentioned Chicago and it wasn't for this union. I went to Chicago for the Neckwear Union.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see.

LUCIA: This is the first time that I had been in Chicago for the hatters. So, that's the difference. Now, I'm getting it straight. Because when I went the first time, my baby was too little and I was still living in New York. And then when I went to Chicago on the.... They had a campaign on the west side of Chicago, I was only there for about a year. When they needed some--the west side of Chicago to be organized. I'm not going into that because it's very involved. They never did get it when their major contract was signed in the Loop in 1935 and 1936, which I had nothing to do with. But that was always a thorn in Zaritsky's flesh, that the west side of Chicago had been cleared by a previous organizer, so he told me. When he left this organizer, a woman, Carolyn Wilson--I don't want it in the record--well, she's dead now. That's not nice, is it? She was told that he had made some progress in negotiations with the west side. They weren't able to include them in with the Loop at the time, in the contract. And not to disturb the status quo, but merely to go along canvassing the people in their homes and building up the strength of the union. Well, apparently, she took a chance like I did in San Francisco, but it didn't work out for her. She thought, "I'm going to call a strike." So she called a strike on the west side of Chicago and it was a disaster. And not only that, but they got mad at Zaritsky

LUCIA: that he double-crossed them. So they fought very bitterly and we lost it. Well, eleven years later--this is 1935--and now they send me in 1940, five years later. Zaritsky thought it was about time to see if the employment had changed, you know. So I go and I was making some progress, I really was. It was very, very difficult. There were either Yugoslavians or Czechoslovakians and some of them could hardly speak English very well. And they were very nationalistic, you know. And they hated the Loop [the Loop union]. So I had to tell them that they're going to have a separate charter for themselves that would be a west side charter and would have nothing to do with the union downtown. On the basis of that, I was making in-roads, when I get a call to go to Atlanta, Georgia. And I had my little girl. I had made arrangements with a family there. She was only seven, not quite seven, when I left San Francisco. I had paid to have that little room built for her so that she could be taken care of. It was a problem because every time that I was changed and moved, the child rebelled. I don't blame her. She had an awful childhood, very bad childhood. She had found a lovable woman in a Jewish family who took pity on her because they felt sorry for her. Auntie Em was a dear and loved the child very much. But I had no more than settled in Chicago when I was called. I said, "Look, I just made arrangements. I paid money to have a room built for my daughter." And they said, "We need you very badly. It's only going to be a couple weeks. It isn't going to last long." So when I went it was on the eve of the strike.

INTERVIEWER: You're really a trouble-shooter, aren't you?

LUCIA: Yeah, that's really what I was. They called me a trouble-maker before and later they called me a trouble-shooter.

INTERVIEWER: So then you went into Dallas, then you went to Chicago . . .

LUCIA: Yeah, always when there was a crisis. They always sent for me.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it must have been very frustrating. It sounded like you really liked San Francisco best, where you could go in and build it up all the way.

LUCIA: Yeah, there I did it myself.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: Yeah, but when you come into somebody else's mess and you don't know the preparation, it does make it hard. But luckily we had a man like Joe Jacobs in Atlanta. He was a dear, he really was. He was a wonderful person. He had done practically all of the organizing himself. You know, by his appearance at meetings and encouraging the.... I think there were two organizers there at the time. There was one, but I'm sure about the two. So the next morning I was going to be.... She told me, "Look, we can't miss it. I could swear we have a majority in all the shops, a

LUCIA: very substantial majority. And I know it's going to be successful," And I says, "Well,..." The reason why I was hesitant was because the people had come in, in response to an article that had appeared in the paper. Zaritsky had been appointed on the committee--oh, what did they call that committee that they had during the NRA days, when the . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

LUCIA: Setting the wage scales for . . .

INTERVIEWER: Regulatory.

LUCIA: Yeah, but there was a word for that. Oh, well. And he had been in Washington and he had met L.D. Thompson who was head of the American Hat Company. Now, I can't tell you anything about the strike that they had in 1935, because I wasn't involved. Joe could tell you about that. And Joe did participate. Again the same organizer that cleared the situation in Chicago did the same thing to L.D. Thompson. Because, you see, Thompson had told Zaritsky, had advised Zaritsky during the NRA days. He had met him during the hearing and he had taken a liking to Zaritsky.

INTERVIEWER: The industry?

LUCIA: The industry, yeah. And he said, "Well, in 1935 we didn't get along, but I guess I didn't know too much about you." But he said, "Any time you want to come to Atlanta, you can come and address the people," and so forth and so on. Well, what happened was that the strike was called and prepared and everything had antagonized the man. Again Zaritsky was called a double-crosser. And once it went to that scale, there was nothing he could do about it but let it go. He can't say, "You can't do it." He fought tooth and nail. Mr. Thompson, the morning of the strike, gave out--what do you call that thing?--blackjacks to each man that came in to scab. He actually gave it to them to use whenever it is necessary. Well, one of our key men--he was an ex-preacher, too--he didn't mean to go in. He misunderstood. He thought that you could go in and come out. And he went in to see who was going to scab. They gave him a blackjack. He was going to stay in there all day. He wasn't going to be obvious about it. And he knew that that was important evidence. That much he knew. That Joe Jacobs would jump at the idea of blackjacks in his possession.

INTERVIEWER: Now, this was in 1930, this strike?

LUCIA: It was in 1940.

INTERVIEWER: 1940. Okay.

LUCIA: 1937--I don't know anything about. Now it's 1940. So we established picket lines and we called a strike, not only in the American Hat Company, but in the Kutz Company and the Standard

LUCIA: Hat Company. What had happened--oh, I know--what happened was.... You see, I'm not coherent to that because I wasn't in the entire situation in chronological order. They had had a hearing and some kind of a labor board case. And the labor board had ruled in favor of the union. And on top of all that, the forty cent minimum--or was it twenty-five cents? No, forty cents--had been issued. And they fought it tooth and nail and it appeared in the Dallas papers that the companies went down to fight the forty cent minimum becoming a law. So when the workers read that in the shops, they thought, "What are we waiting for? Here the union's trying to organize us. Let's strike." So that's how the strike took place. It lasted about seventeen--sixteen--eighteen--weeks. I'll have to look it up, I forget.

INTERVIEWER: This is the 1940 strike.

LUCIA: Yeah, the 1940 strike. It lasted about.... The American was the last to sign up. Kutz settled but didn't sign up until after the American, I think. The Standard signed first. And the reason why he signed first--by the way, he was decent, the man from Standard. He closed the shop because he said he didn't want a repetition of any lynching that had taken place in Frank's case.

INTERVIEWER: Leo Frank's case?

LUCIA: Leo Frank's case in Atlanta. Because, he said, "If anything should happen, I'm Jewish, you know, they could do something to me." So he closed his plant. He didn't even try to operate, which was a godsend because we didn't have to maintain a picket line, except a skeleton crew just to watch. So our emphasis was on the American Hat because we knew he was the one, he was the head of the association, he was the one who would determine whether the strike would be settled or not. So it took from January to July. I'll tell you why I remember that. When I was called in Chicago to go to Atlanta, I thought, "Oh, boy, warmer climate! I don't have to bring coats." I got myself a straw hat. They were just making the straw hats then with red cherries bobbing up and down. I remember so distinctly. And do you know why I remember it? Because when I got to Atlanta, they had their first snow storm--(laughs)--in about twenty years! I didn't even have a heavy coat. It was one of those freak things that happened. So we set up a soup kitchen. We had a magnificent bunch of people. Oh, we had violence. Oh, yes. The company gave out all kinds of weapons to use. "Use anything you can get a hold of." And the women came out with scissors in their hands. They were the aggressors. We had to call for help from the labor movement, to come and help us on our lines. You know, we couldn't cope with it. And the police, they were all over the lot! And then there was one girl, one scab that was.... Is it good to go into that sort of thing?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes. Definitely.

LUCIA: She was, well, maybe I was fond of her.

INTERVIEWER: You tell it the way you want to tell it.

LUCIA: This one girl who was a scab--and she was a pretty little thing. You'll see her picture among the pictures. And every time she'd come out, she'd make obscene gestures and twist her fanny and so forth and anger the girls. Oh, they just hated Alice. So one day--I knew someday they were going to get her. And they got her. And they stripped her of all her clothing. Well, I was--I had my--I used umbrellas instead of signs. If you'll notice I always have black umbrellas whether it's rain or shine. So, I folded my umbrella and I kept hitting our people because I saw the police coming. "Let her go, let her go. The police are coming!" And she thought that I was trying to beat her up! And she began to tear my clothes off! And I got mad. (laughs) Anyway, to make a long story short, the police came around. They took off their coats and they covered her up. The next morning we appeared in court. There was a judge there who used to drink whiskey like Coca-Cola. He used to have it in Coca-Cola bottles. So here all our pickets came and all their scabs came. And here we were on each side, you know, all looking at each other, glaring at each other. So he was trying to find out who tore the clothes off this woman--he had the clothes on his desk--and nobody knew. They said, "A crowd." But you couldn't tell who did it, who started it, who it was. There was a terrible crowd. "Who's in charge of this strike?" Someone told him that I was and he put me on the witness stand. He kept feeding me all kinds of questions. I said, "I'm sorry, your honor, I saw a crowd." He says, "Were you there?" "Yes, I was. I was using my umbrella on my own people." Which was the truth, that time. "I was trying to spare the girl. I didn't want her hurt." "And who were the people?" "I don't know!" In a crowd like that who could tell? I said, "I couldn't tell." There were people from the labor movement and everything. So he said, "Come adjourn to my chambers." So I went with him. And he says, "Now that we're alone, you tell me: Who was it?" I says, "Now that we're alone, I can really tell you the truth. I don't know a damn thing." I thought, "You son of a gun, did you think I would fall for that sort of stuff?" (laughs) So we went back to the witness stand. Then he really wiped the floor with me. "A woman who was supposed to keep law and order--blah, blah, blah--comes into our beautiful city and causes all these disturbances." But he never did get them. They couldn't find anybody. There were several arrested but they couldn't prove that they were the people that were involved. Then when they went to.... The scabs were prompted by Thompson to go to City Hall and protest what was happening on the picket line, because of the whole talk about mass picket. We really had them. We used to have the whole labor movement, every night they'd come out. And they went to City Hall to see the mayor, Mayor Hartsfield. And while they were there, somebody tipped over a couple of cars. So some of our boys were arrested. I used to send people to go and bail them out, you know, go with the bondman and bail them out and they would and come back. So I stopped sending people down. I got Joe Jacobs.

LUCIA: I said, "They're keeping all our people in jail and they're not letting them out." Well, that was another incident. Then we had an incident where one of the scabs used razors; they had razors!

INTERVIEWER: The old straight edge?

LUCIA: Yeah, the straight edge, old-fashioned razor. The fight had started. And one of our boys didn't feel it right away, because of the excitement. He had been slashed all up and down the back. But not deeply, you know, superficially, all his back was full of blood. "Go get an ambulance, go get a doctor, go get the police!" Well, too late. We used to sing the song, "Old man Thompson ain't what he used to be, ain't what he used to be...." [Sung to the tune of "The Old Gray Mare"], the moment they'd see him coming, they'd start, and they'd sing to him. No matter where he went he heard that song. And it was in the summertime and they didn't have any air conditioning and he had to keep the doors open. And we'd sing all those union songs that we used to know, all day long. He said he could stand anything but the singing! I don't blame him. And that's what provoked it. And finally, he saw that it was going to continue for a long time, he might just as well get it over with. So he called Zaritsky in. Of course, it was the standard call: He said, "Look, I don't care what the association says, I need to build up my business and keep my business and he has scabs and I don't have scabs. I want to sign." So he was the first one to sign. And then Kutz began to weaken a little bit and then finally the American . . . (break in tape) We were anxious after so many months. We were keeping this thing alive, asking our local unions all over the country to submit money for payment of strike benefits and labor board cases, what have you. And some of them--immediately their homes came due, their cars came due, gas and electric and all that stuff, you know, and it set the line for a small union. One thing I give credit to our international union, it did sponsor--it did take care of the people, as long as they could. And they were quite determined to see the thing through once they tackled it. Well, then we signed a contract which gave them very good.... Well, not a union shop contract, which meant that the bulk of the scabs.... But I said, "Mr. Thompson, you won't believe me," when I was sitting in negotiations. I didn't negotiate the contract--not that I could've done any better, don't misunderstand me. I just sat in and listened. Zaritsky did the.... He was fabulous about it. But I told him one thing, "Mr. Thompson, Mr. Thompson, you're going to regret that you don't sign at least a union shop contract. It sounds like a threat, but I don't mean it that way. It's just a piece of advice. Because your people are not making hats. They're going to fight unions. Each of them will clobber each other at your expense." And that's exactly what happened, of course with a little instigation. Their lunches were thrown out in the garbage, their coats and sleeves were sewn up, and all kinds of things. And for about six months the man nearly went crazy. He couldn't get his production, you know. So one day he called me up. He said, "Miss Lucia, can you get a meeting out today?" I said, "What for?" He says, "I'm sending all the people asking

LUCIA: them to join the union." Maybe it was longer than that, I don't remember, but a period of quite a number of months had elapsed. And when the people came they were mad. Only I didn't have our people with them. I thought there'd be a war, you know. I said, "Just myself." He said, "I don't want anybody else but you to be there. And make them feel at home, you know, it's a bad situation but I'm sick of talking union instead of making hats." They had some opposition. Those people came prepared to give me battle. That's why I say I was glad that for once I.... That time I really didn't antagonize anybody, I really didn't. So they couldn't hold anything against me as an individual.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little bit about the unionists in Atlanta. Now, they didn't have any real union history in the needle trades. Some in construction, and of course, railroad and machinists were founded there. Not in the old trades, nothing. So these are people who had really been learning unionism, I guess, four or five years before you had gotten there.

LUCIA: Oh, sure.

INTERVIEWER: They sound like they were very tough. And they were good unions, once they finally won.

LUCIA: Yeah, and you know the girls--you know that the Southern girls were the backbone of almost every strike, I mean almost every campaign I conducted. It was always the women that responded more readily than the men.

INTERVIEWER: Even in the South?

LUCIA: Even in the South, yes. Mostly in the South, because I think that first of all, a woman is forced to think in terms of expenses and taking care of the house and everything else. And so many of those women--their husbands were nowhere to be seen, you know. They really had the responsibility. In Texas, it was even worse. They didn't even know where the husbands were half the time. I don't know whether it's changed now, but it used to be. But they were lovely people, very warm-hearted people, even the scabs. They wouldn't always let me in. Somehow I always used to work my way in, in some form or fashion. But they'd always ask you to bring bread with you. And I'd never refuse. In Atlanta it wasn't too bad, but in some of the places in Texas I was afraid even to sit down, you know, the places were so messy. But I did, because I knew that it would be a slight to them if I didn't. So then--let me see--then they came, little by little, Kutz came along and Standard had already signed. I stayed in Atlanta for a while, I think. I don't remember where my next place was. Did I get to Greenville, Alabama?

INTERVIEWER: No, not yet. Here's a folder.

LUCIA: In Atlanta--I want to mention Joe's participation in the Atlanta situation, which was really remarkable. His labor board cases

LUCIA: and his endurance during all that time. Because he had some personal problems that he was involved in, too, which I don't want to discuss. You probably know about it, don't you?

INTERVIEWER: No.

LUCIA: It was domestic. So, where was I, in Greenville? Where's Greenville? (looking through clippings) I think Greenville was earlier. No, 1946.

INTERVIEWER: Is this so important, though? What happened during the War?

LUCIA: During the War, I was in Atlanta. I must have been.

INTERVIEWER: And you began reorganizing, like you did in San Francisco?

LUCIA: Well, I was also in Corsicana off and on, and I'd go back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: You were.... Throughout both your posts . . .

LUCIA: My posts?

INTERVIEWER: Weren't you sort of a roving organizer?

LUCIA: I was supposed to work out of my Atlanta office. I was called the Atlanta--the Southern representative. I had the title, but no money. By the way, Atlanta was good to me. What I had in this house belongs to the goodness of the landlady. I was her beneficiary.

INTERVIEWER; Really?! That's amazing!

LUCIA: I didn't get it with the hatter's union. Well, I'll tell you about it sometime. Now, let me see, what year?

INTERVIEWER: I think you had Corsicana in there [among the clippings] somewhere. I remember seeing it.

LUCIA: What city did I just say?

INTERVIEWER: Corsicana, Texas. Here's Greensville. Here, that was the hat workers in Dallas but that's earlier. Here's Resistol but that was earlier. Oh, here it is, here's Corsicana, Texas.

LUCIA: Well, Corsicana's a long, long story. How many times did I go to Texas? 1951, here's one from 1951 here. I think that was about the first time I went. And that's 1958.

INTERVIEWER: This stuff is great. "Texas Mill Girl Protection Cleared." (headline)

LUCIA: 1958. What you want is something earlier than that, right?

INTERVIEWER: Let's go over World War II. Let me try to get the outlines, and

INTERVIEWER: especially like the people who may do the actual processing of this, it would be real handy for them to have something to fit this stuff into. So during the War then; after you won the victory--and I gather from everyone's point of view it was a victory in Atlanta.

LUCIA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Except for maybe the bosses. (laughs) Anyway, so you won there in Atlanta. You stayed in Atlanta and you intended to go . . .

LUCIA: I had a home in Atlanta. You see, I inherited this property from this woman. Wait a minute, wait a minute.

INTERVIEWER: So you say you stayed . . .

LUCIA: In Atlanta, we had the strike, and then I was transferred to Norwalk, Connecticut. Yeah, now I'm getting it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I see Norwalk . . .

LUCIA: Somebody took--Albert Standel took my place. They thought the job had been done. 7-4-42.... 1942--1944, Cleveland, Norwalk, Norwalk Hatters.... 1945, 1943, yeah, in 1942 I went to Norwalk. I was asked to go to Norwalk. That's the Knox and Dobbs hats.

INTERVIEWER: Knox canning works?

LUCIA: No, the name was the Hat Corporation of America, but they made the Knox and the Dobbs and the Cavanaugh hats.

INTERVIEWER: Those were the brand names? Knox, Dobbs, and Cavanaugh?

LUCIA: Cavanaugh: C-A-V-A-N-A-U-G-H.

INTERVIEWER: And this was what, right around the time of the outbreak of World War II?

LUCIA: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: 1941?

LUCIA: Don't forget that during that period, too, even in the hat shops in Atlanta, the men's jobs were taken by women, because they went either to the war or they went into Marietta, Georgia, where they had a lot of defense work. They made a lot of money, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, the Lockheed-Bell was over there.

LUCIA: Yeah. Well, let me see. They had.... I was told by Zaritsky that I wouldn't be liked by the--be wanted by the individual I was going to help out [Alonseman] because he resents anybody who comes into his territory, because he feels insecure about

LUCIA: his job. So, I didn't look forward with any keen anticipation to going. But it happened to be during the war, and being a small town, he had made arrangements that I stay with a family in somebody's home. But of all the homes, it was a German home; they were pro-German! Well, anyways, it was a pretty place, but she kept trying to engage me in conversation. She said that the German people were not as belligerent and so forth. So it didn't work out well. And I told my colleague, "For heaven's sake, why did you stick me in a home like this?" I didn't know the place and being at war and in a Nazi home.... Well, he was pro-Il Duce himself, so what do you expect? (laughs) So I went into a situation that made me sick to my stomach and I couldn't do a single thing without asking his [the other organizer] permission. I had been free to do pretty much as I pleased. Here, I had to ask, "Can I call up or can I go to see so-and-so?" So Zaritsky said, "You'll have to be patient; we need you very badly. There's a whole area that needs.... A lot of girls need to be organized." So we got the girls but I never managed to get him. He said, "Women belong in the kitchen." And after two years, I couldn't take it anymore. However, we did make progress. We got a number of shops and we finished the organization work in the Hat Corporation of America. And I went on. I was there for about--not quite--two years, almost two years. I had already established a home and my daughter was happy in that little town and school--another school for her to get used to. Luckily, I had found the kind of place--of apartment that had a number of apartments in the building itself, an old building, and people were kind enough to take care of my daughter while I was working so that when she came home from school she had somebody to talk to. And he [Zaritsky] calls me and tells me, "I need you very badly." Where did he have me go? Chicago, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Was this DeKalb?

LUCIA: Or DeKalb? No, it was DeKalb. When did I go to DeKalb?

INTERVIEWER: No, I think DeKalb was in 1938, from your clippings and so on.

LUCIA: Yeah, DeKalb, it was in 1938.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. World War II . . .

LUCIA: DeKalb was before Atlanta.

INTERVIEWER: Then you went from Atlanta to Norwalk and then to Chicago?

LUCIA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Boy, they kept you moving. Let me ask you something else about that period. You talked before about your dealings with the government and the NLRB. During the War, you're dealing with the War Labor Board. How was that different for you from organizing? Or was there any big difference in dealing with the war-time government agencies?

LUCIA: You mean, referring things to the Labor Board?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

LUCIA: Oh, there were some places in the South where we had no choice. In fact, we avoided strikes, we were afraid of strikes because there were too many people who were ready to take the jobs, you know, where you didn't so much in other areas and it was even a gamble even in Atlanta, except that I was just lucky in Atlanta. Apparently, I had done some good spade work. And I was alone in Atlanta, by the way, so when I say "I", I'm not bragging. Next time I mention any other situation, I'm going to say "we" because I don't want to create the impression that this was done by one individual, you know? I want to be very careful about that. But, in this instance, Joe and myself in Atlanta--with the help of people inside--but we did the work. Now there were people who didn't know too much about unions, but not too bad as it was deeper in the South. The deeper south you went, the less they knew and the more pressure.... Not pressure as much as fear--the more fear there was. Yeah, that was the point.

INTERVIEWER: What about religion?

LUCIA: In Atlanta we had Billie Smith who was a very devout person. She was an arch scab if ever there was one! But there was something about her that made me feel that if ever we have a person like that on our side, we really have it along. So during the strike, she was the meanest thing on two legs. I would always say, "Good morning, Billie, how are you today, Billie?" And she would almost spit at me. Well, she wouldn't spit because she was a lady, but she always made you feel like she would. Do you know that the night that we had the meeting to welcome the scabs in and tell them, "Look, what are we fighting about? You know, we're all looking for the same thing--security, human dignity, and so forth and so on"--which is a religious theme. And I thought, "Oh, well, I'll use a religious theme knowing that Billie's here tonight." After all, you know, we did take a lot. And Christ was born in the days of violence but not on the part of Christ and his disciples, although there may have been times when they were provoked into it. And it made a hit with her. And I said, "Some of you here weren't very nice with me when I came in. I extended my hand, at least." And I felt that that was the human thing to do. So she got up and she said, "Miss Lucia, I'm one of the ones that almost wanted to slap your face when you extended your hand. I want to apologize; from now on I'm going to be a union member." And that did it. Every time somebody would talk against the union it was just like slapping her. She made a wonderful secretary for about ten or twelve years after that. Now, I drifted, didn't I? Oh, you asked me if I'm religious.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LUCIA: The religious question. No, I never was religious. You know, we didn't have the colored question in Atlanta at that time. No, we didn't. In Atlanta--no, wait a minute--yes, we did. But we

LUCIA: didn't have any colored people in the hall. I know I had it with the Rushton Doll workers when I was organizing the other outfit.

INTERVIEWER: You also did that thing in that place, you did some other organizing in Atlanta after the hat union.

LUCIA: Oh, yeah, after the hat workers. That was something else.

INTERVIEWER: Rushton Doll, which was a . . .

LUCIA: Well, in between my work here and my work in Atlanta I was in everything. The Jewish community first. I brought Scholssberg from New York to the first meeting of the labor movement where the recognition--working toward the recognition of Israel for the Jews. I got the Labor Committee for Israel, I think it was called. So I finally got the labor movement to move its fanny from its chair, you know, to do something way back--that was way back in 1940, 1941, 1942. Because I went to Norwalk in 1940. I went back to vote--that's where we're at now.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, here we go. Okay.

LUCIA: I went back to Atlanta in 1942 and then stayed for a long time. Then out of the Atlanta office, I kept working on the various things. Are we at 1942 or 1940?

INTERVIEWER: I think we got to 1942 now.

LUCIA: Yeah, back to 1942. I got called to go to.... 1942--in 1942 I was in Norwalk and in 1942 I was called back to Atlanta. Is that where we are?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, is that right now? Where were you on Pearl Harbor Day?

LUCIA: I was in Atlanta on Pearl Harbor Day.

INTERVIEWER: That's in 1941.

LUCIA: Yeah, I remember. It was a Saturday morning, wasn't it? Or Sunday?

INTERVIEWER: Sunday.

LUCIA: I knew it was a weekend. You know why I remember? Zaritsky happened to be there that weekend and when Pearl Harbor.... I remember the horror on his face.

INTERVIEWER: So you were moving around a lot.

LUCIA: Oh, he used to be the kind of person that everybody loved and people would--board members--would almost hug him. He knew everybody by name: Joe, this, that and the other's name and this one [referring to herself] wouldn't remember the time of day. (laughs) Don't worry, it's mutual.

INTERVIEWER: So you were in Norwalk in 1942 and you moved back to Atlanta.

LUCIA: I moved back to Atlanta. I got a call from Zaritsky again. "I hate to do this to you, but I hope you're not sorry you're going to leave." Because I just couldn't work with that guy. And besides, the work had been finished anyway. My participation had been completed. He said, "We need you in Atlanta; we have some difficulty that Joe was involved in." He wanted me to help, and I did. And I think from there on I stayed on until.... When was the next stop? Oh, I kept going back and forth to Greenville, to Corsicana, to the Atlanta office. It was pretty hard to remember what follows. Now, of course, I had seen Atlanta grow. We also established a workers' education school. I don't know whether you came across that or not. Joe'll tell you all about it; I was very active in it. Again I had to go to the League of Councils to see if they would sanction it. I was always asking them to sanction something or other. They were pretty good. I might have done a little wrist twisting now and then, once in a while, but I was active in their movement and they really liked me. They said, "Now we're going to stop saying 'Damn Yankee'. We used to say 'Damn Yankee', now we're going to stop saying 'Damn Yankee' and we'll just say 'Yankee'." And I was active, I was chairman of their organizing committee. I was in everything that they proposed that was worthwhile even when we finally woke up one morning and found out that Governor Arnhole was no longer governor. That the council or the assembly or whatever it is--General Assembly, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: . . . had elected to put Herman Talmadge--no, Eugene Talmadge, the father.... Which is which? I always forget.

INTERVIEWER: Eugene's the father, Herman's the son.

LUCIA: Eugene Talmadge in as governor of Georgia. And I protested at the council. How could they do that? They had no right. What's the sense of having an election if the council was going to supercede an election that was held by the people of Georgia? The newspaper said that a bomb was about to explode but it turned out to be a dud! (laughs) Of course, I had appealed the decision to the chair. People in the union by that time didn't know what the hell they were voting about; it just went through. But the Americans for Democratic Action was born then. You saw a development in Atlanta which was really remarkable, the changes that occurred. Even Mayor Hartsfield . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was this during World War II or after World War II?

LUCIA: This was . . .

INTERVIEWER: Or it's that period of the forties?

LUCIA: Upon my return during the World War . . .

INTERVIEWER: During the War.

LUCIA: There wasn't much but it was after the War upon my return when I was stationed there for a number of years. I really lived there from 1942 to 1956. I was operating out of the Atlanta office to all these other places. I never saw anything change like Atlanta did. Mayor Hartsfield.... I remember when I went the first time in 1940, that was during the fall, when he called me in during the strike. He said, "If the time ever comes when the Negro is going to have a vote and be recognized like a white person, I'm going to take that American flag and stomp on it." I thought, "My God, how can he say that to someone--well, say it at all--but to someone that was in the labor movement?" I said, "That day might come, but I doubt that you're going to stomp on it when it does come, because you'll be pushed into accepting it." Do you know it wasn't long before he was the first mayor in the South to have Negro policemen? Not because of me, don't misunderstand me. I mean as a result of what had happened in the interim. He had to eat some of his words. And believe me, then he became a pretty good mayor at that, you know, not too bad, considering the background. Again, I had no Negroes to contend with, except in this Georgia Workers' Education School that we had. We had meetings, and we had a dance one night with black people there, and we danced with the black people, and the neighbors started to call the police, and boy, they made a ruckus. It appeared in the newspapers. Then when I became chairman of the organizing committee in Atlanta for the labor council--Joe could tell you something about that, too. We had a man by the name of Gossett. His name was Gossett. He was chairman of the council but he was a crook if there ever was one. He was a dishonest person.

INTERVIEWER: G-O-S-S-E-T?

LUCIA: G-O-S-S-E-T-T. We'll come across his name somewhere in the.... As chairman of the organizing committee, I was very active.

INTERVIEWER: This was, again, during the War?

LUCIA: It would have to occur even after the War. And he had engineered a strike in the hotels, Gossett. But he had only called the white people. He hadn't tried to.... Just without the black people. He sunk. So I had a fight with him. But he knew me. First of all, "You're going to lose the strike; you can't win with just the white people. The bulk of the people in there are black." So he lost. But, then the Rushton Doll business came up, which were also colored, and he was in charge as the president of the council. He used to have one of the black men sign the checks without filling in what it was for. So the poor man came up to me and told me, and I said, "Don't you sign it. Don't you sign anything that doesn't say where it's going to." And so he went back and he said, "Miss Lucia told me not to sign anything unless she knows where it's going." So we had a fight with him. I finally pushed him out of there. I said to the men, "He doesn't deserve to"--this was all gratis work--"he doesn't deserve to be in charge of your situation." But we did get the doll workers; we won. I

LUCIA: don't know whether they're still organized. But the toy workers then gave me trouble from New York. They called up Zaritsky and told him that I was interfering with their jurisdiction. And then--that's right--he gets a call from Petofsky that I was interfering with his jurisdiction--who else?--the elevator operators, whatever organization they belonged to, got a call from them, then the department store unions. He said, "What are you giving me all this trouble for?" Oh, I'm not very coherent today. I can't remember things like I used to.

INTERVIEWER: But when you were talking about.... That's how you really like to operate. You like to be in a city and able to organize whoever came and asked. That was the part that you seemed to really enjoy, that you felt best about.

LUCIA: Yeah. Now, I would've liked to have stayed in Norwalk, I liked the size of that town. But I couldn't, I couldn't stay there. He didn't want me. He was glad when I was relieved anyway. Now, in Atlanta, what can I tell you about Atlanta? There was so many things that happened in Atlanta. It was really remarkable.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't you talk about this Marshall or European tour you took.

LUCIA: Oh, the Marshall Plan?

INTERVIEWER: Tape number four.

LUCIA: Oh, you remember Elk McGill. He used to be the liberal editor of the paper . . .

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, the Constitution.

LUCIA: He interviewed Verska; she used to be a columnist.

INTERVIEWER: You said a woman in the union.... You spoke a lot about women in the union. I guess . . .

LUCIA: Yeah, because I was in the union. I was called upon by a lot of universities, I was used a lot. I remember one time I was introduced. There were three speakers--and the chairman was embarrassed when he said it. Afterwards he realized what he said. He said, "We have three speakers: a lady, a gentleman, and a woman organizer." (screams of laughter) I turned it into a joke and I had everybody laughing. Let's see, I was a guest speaker at an ITU meeting.... Oh, in the universities I was. I used to be called upon quite a bit. You remember, here it is, the ITU meeting.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, ITU in 1951. With your hat again.

LUCIA: Oh, yeah. The pressman's union.

INTERVIEWER: Is that why they called you the hat lady?

LUCIA: Yeah, because of the hat. Here's Toby. I was trying to think of his name. The Textile Workers' Union.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Valenti.

LUCIA: Yeah, Tony Valenti. I couldn't think of his name. I wish I looked like some of the pictures I'm seeing today. (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about women in the movement. Tell me about women among the . . .

LUCIA: Well, first of all, I think the needle trades were better than any other union in recognizing women. But then the majority of their members were women. Maybe that's the reason why. But, I remember Dorothy Belanca in the Amalgamated, when I was in the Amalgamated Union in Rochester, New York, in the mid-twenties. She was already a vice-president. And they had several men, and so does the ILG. Now, whether they're getting any more recognition from other unions, I don't know, whether the teachers' unions or any of them are giving them recognition.

INTERVIEWER: How about in the South. Were there any rare-to-find women leaders in the South?

LUCIA: Well, in the teachers' union they had a number of them, but that was because they were politically geared in Georgia. Ira Gerald--I guess she's dead now--she used to be the head of the teachers' union there. She was sort of mealy mouthed, but.... (laughs) People that don't have a definite point of view would go with the wind. They change so quickly; you either have opinions.... That doesn't mean that you can't sometimes change for the better, you know what I mean? But some people could change from one day to another depending on who was speaking or who was leading or whatever was a more favorable position to take. And I have never been that way. Maybe it was a mistake. I could've.... Alex appreciated my work; in fact, he exploited me shamefully.

INTERVIEWER: Alex Rose?

LUCIA: Yes, Alex Rose. And he knew who to call when they needed somebody, when they wanted the job done. But he didn't appreciate talking back. "I'm not going to do it, I don't want to do it. I don't think it's right." He told me once he wanted me to pull the men out in Longview, Texas to a strike. "Then we won't have to pay strike benefits to the others." I said, "Well, the hell I'll do that. They're going to lose their jobs, there won't be any work. Do you think we'll be able to hold them as members?" "If we pull the men out and it only costs a little bit, when we may lose the entire trial." I said, "If you want to call them, you come here and call them yourself. I'm not going to call them." Well, when you do that three or four times, you know . . .

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LUCIA: Once he wanted me to put black people in Dallas in a shop that never had a black worker in it. How could I put a picket line of

LUCIA: black men where all white girls were working? I'd lose those girls. I'd lose their membership. He said, "Well, you just better. We got to educate...." You educate them after you have them, but not while you're trying to get them. Right?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LUCIA: So again I didn't do it. I don't know how many times I didn't do it.

INTERVIEWER: I heard a talk by Eulah McGill.... I don't know if you know her.

LUCIA: Who?

INTERVIEWER: Eulah McGill. She was an organizer for the Amalgamated in the South. Anyway, she said that sometimes it's easier for her to be a woman because people just didn't respect her as much. They weren't aware of what she was doing. They just didn't think that she was seriously organizing. And she could get away with things that men couldn't.

LUCIA: Well, I think you had more access to homes than men had. You could go on an early Saturday morning and you would find the woman in her robe all dissheveled and still get in; whereas, they wouldn't let a man in. Or if the woman was alone and the husband was away, if they had a jealous husband, they didn't want to let the man in. I know when I had John Coolidge--and he was a darn good organizer--there were times when he'd say, "Carmen, I can't get into their homes." And I knew it wasn't because he couldn't. But I knew why he couldn't get in, because the particular woman had a very jealous husband. I said, "If you want to go, I'll go with you." So there were times when he couldn't get in. But actually I think that they're [women] accepted very readily. And yet then, you'll find some that.... No, I never found.... The Southern women would accept a woman if they thought that she was intelligent enough. They would accept her as readily as a man. Is that what you're trying to say?

INTERVIEWER: For example, what I'm trying to get at, do you think that it's different in other parts of the country, that they wouldn't . . .

LUCIA: No, it depends on who was speaking. I mean, I've never faced that. I didn't face it in San Francisco even when I had trouble with Harry Bridges. And there were plenty of men in the Department Store Union, you know. Quite a number of them. Not as many as women, because they were in other positions besides clerks--you know, elevator operators, in the back of the stores, and different things. I'm deviating now. Now, what do you want to know?

INTERVIEWER: Well, I had a couple more general questions that I wanted to ask . . .

LUCIA: [looking at a clipping] There's another hat again.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right. I saw that picture.

LUCIA: You know we had hat day declared by Mayor Hartsfield in Atlanta. I don't know whether you know about that or whether that has any significance or not. (pause) He became a Christian, you know, when we had.... He took a liking to Zaritsky after the contract was signed and when we had the dinner for Zaritsky honoring him, you know. He was invited and he came. He enjoyed it so much. Especially when he heard Zaritsky say that we believe in exchanging ballots, using ballots instead of bullets. He thought that was a good expression, you know.

INTERVIEWER: He liked that. When did you go to Europe, then? When did you make this trip?

LUCIA: Oh, the Marshall Plan. Oh, 1951.

INTERVIEWER: And how did that come about?

LUCIA: How did that come about? Well, there were two people who were in the labor movement the opposite of Joe's union in textile . . .

INTERVIEWER: TWA?

LUCIA: Kenneth Doty and Agnes Doty, husband and wife. She was a teacher, though, not in the school, but she was a very educated woman; she had all kinds of degrees and things. Well, let me find this article and then I'll come to it. He left the movement, with the Textile Workers, the CIO Textile Workers Union. They went into government work and both of them were highly educated and well-trained at various universities around the country, degrees in everything, very fine people. Well, they took a liking to me in Atlanta. We were very good friends. When they went to work for the Marshall Plan in Paris and they knew.... They call it junket nowadays. They liked me pretty well and she designed this trip, you know. And if anybody'd do any good having her on the trip, she'd take it seriously. It wouldn't be just a junket. So they proposed it. Well, the AF of L couldn't say much because I was a vice-president, but they did choose Belle Boulanger. She was from Boston in the Textile Workers' Union, in the CIO Textile Workers' Union and Gibbons from the Teamsters' Union from St. Louis. I don't know whether these names mean anything to you.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Gibbons I know.

LUCIA: Yeah, Gibbons you would probably know.

INTERVIEWER: Boulanger, I don't. French?

LUCIA: She spoke a certain kind of French.

INTERVIEWER: Canadian? Quebecois?

LUCIA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: French American is like French Canadian. I used to live up there.

LUCIA: So, the three of us.... The black man never materialized because he was taken ill. There were supposed to be four of us.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a government sponsored tour?

LUCIA: Government sponsored tour. They turned in our names as being to study the effects of the Marshall Plan. You know, the advance of communism in Paris, in France, at that particular time was pretty frightening. So they decided that they'd send a group of labor people to see if they could influence the people in the labor movement, because they had so many unions that represented the workers. So we were sent in. I was accepted and I went. It was a period of about six or eight weeks--I've forgotten, about six or eight weeks. Oh, it was a wonderful trip. One thing I didn't like is that, of course, the two men I was with--I didn't expect them to act any differently. Nothing was too good for organized labor, was their slogan. So they had to have a chauffeur, they had to have a limousine to go to all these God-forsaken places in France that didn't even have enough money to spend on a machine, mimeograph machine, you know. I used to be ashamed to ride in such luxury, you know? It was scandalous! I told Agnes and Ken. They said, "You know them. They're used to high living in New York." I said, "Yes, but we're trying to make an impression." Well, they couldn't control it, because everybody who went on those junkets all demanded those things. So he said, "Why shouldn't organized labor have it?" So we were to interview the workers, to interview the employers. We were to interview the various contingents, the periphery of the people, the municipal people and so forth and so on. But we were sure to keep away from the communist unions. Well, first of all, they wouldn't have even given us the time of day, as far as that was concerned. So we had to learn. This is where Ken and Agnes helped because they had been there for a number of years already. They knew the entire situation. So we did, and we'd go into factories. We would interview the workers. We had an interpreter. "I want to tell you about the Marshall Plan." Some of them didn't even know that there was such a thing as the Marshall Plan. They happened to have business agents or shop chairmen who weren't sympathetic about the United States helping out on the Marshall Plan, who wouldn't tell them anything. They'd sometimes take the stickers off the boxes so that they wouldn't know where it came from. So to a certain degree it was withheld, but to another degree, then, there was always the resentment that America pays. It seems to be able to buy anything it wants. As far as our arrival in that kind of atmosphere, they made fun of us, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LUCIA: Our unions, our kind of unions--plush offices. Some of them had been to Washington to see the AF of L offices and different offices. And, "What do you care about the workers?" and what have you. And when they heard I was from Atlanta, Georgia, the Rockland situation

LUCIA: was rocking at that time. Boy, did they get after me! And I said, "Just a minute now. First of all, in America nobody laments what's happening as far as the bigotry in groups like the Negroes, the Indians, and all the people that have been subjected to all kinds of exploitation and bigotry, but at least they can still open their mouth and say something without being put in jail. At least there's hope that we can still...." And there's been slight changes. And I told them, "You know, even in Atlanta, in the short time I've been there, I've seen changes that I thought would never have been possible. But it was interesting because, well, Gibbons couldn't forgive them. Gibbons was awful. He said they'd bow from their waist when they'd talk to their bosses, and they did, you know. Such subservience. It would sicken him to think about it. And he kept saying, "I don't blame them. As long as you people have that kind of attitude...." Of course, we were talking to the wrong people. Because people that come to the meetings, most of them already knew the score, right?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LUCIA: It's the ones that don't come that are very difficult to reach. Then the boys went down in the mines where I couldn't go. They said the men were superstitious about women going down into the mines. Well, I got a copy of the report somewhere if you want to see it or use it. Now what we said: "We were very displeased with what we found." The money had not trickled down to where it should have trickled down. It only got so far and then it suddenly stopped. The effect on the worker, which was the people you were concerned about.... We wanted to stop communism. Then we're not doing the real job. So we're not censoring the Plan as a whole, we're just saying the implementation of the Plan is not complete and is not correct. Well, when we got back to Washington they got our report before we got there. They had called a meeting of the press; they cancelled it. They didn't want it to go, but it got in, because everywhere I went I talked about the Marshall Plan and I told the truth, you know? See, like for instance: "Shift in ECA Aid to Workers Urged." You know, that sort of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: ECA is the Marshall Plan, right?

LUCIA: Yeah. See here's another one. I like the heading on this one.

INTERVIEWER: I think they make it out on this one that you're an attractive lady. The others, you're just . . .

LUCIA: Oh, one calls me comely. The one in Atlanta used to use the word compliment. I said he used to laugh at me. Well, see now, we got them from all over saying,"Labor Observers Rap ECA Money Use." And then there was a Rochester girl who was there with the ECA and she got this in the Rochester paper, and all my Rochester friends were so pleased that I got in.

INTERVIEWER: Why didn't they send you to Italy? You must've known Italian when you were growing up.

LUCIA: Yeah, well, I could have at least, but my Italian is . . .

INTERVIEWER: Long time . . .

LUCIA: Yeah, I would have gotten.... And Gibbons, he's terrific. I don't know what's happened to him since Papa died. I haven't heard anything. He's done a terrific job in St. Louis.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I know what happened to him.

LUCIA: What happened to him?

INTERVIEWER: Gibbons was their left-winger. Gibbons was the one who came out against the war.

LUCIA: Oh, I knew he was a left-winger, but not a commie!

INTERVIEWER: No, no. He was a socialist. And he was the one who spoke out against the Vietnam War.

LUCIA: Did he?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I heard him speak a couple of times. And they froze him out. Oh, he may be still in and have an official position, but his power in the union is really very narrow.

LUCIA: Oh, Fitzsimmons is a crook anyway!

INTERVIEWER: (inaudible)

LUCIA: No, because it wouldn't do him any good. Look what happened to.... And Jimmy hadn't been stuck with the crooks. I tangled with Jimmy in the Teamsters in Winchester. We had a fight.

INTERVIEWER: Jimmy was a toughy.

LUCIA: But he won out. Yeah, he was a toughy. What else do you want to know about the Marshall Plan?

INTERVIEWER: Well, anything you can find.

LUCIA: See: "Democracy at Stake." What paper is that?

INTERVIEWER: The butcher workers . . .

LUCIA: I don't know, what is it?

INTERVIEWER: The Butcher Workers' Union.

LUCIA: Oh, the Butcher Workers' Union. Oh, I used to like Tom--what was his name?--Pat Gorman. I used to like him. When I was in Chicago I knew him.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I heard a lot of nice things about him, too.

LUCIA: So we were there and we talked to workers through the.... I remember one time after the meeting they took us in the back of the room and they had just some cheap wine, you know, they were awfully poor and they were so tickled to give it to us and I was so proud that I just barely put my lips.... I don't know how to drink, I never learned how to drink. I didn't know what to say to the woman; merci was all I knew. I took hold of her hand and I said a word that meant comrade, I used a French term. I've forgotten it now, something that means comrade. Maybe an Italian word. And she understood and then she beamed and smiled and then everybody put their hands together on the table, you know, and they began to sing some French songs. It was such a lovely spirit. And I thought they were trying so hard, you know, because of the rift there between the commie unions. In fact, we were refused dinner in one place because the chef was a communist. He said, when he heard there were Americans, "I'm not going to serve them and I won't cook for them." (laughs) I remember Gibbons saying, "It was a good thing he told us, because I would have been afraid to eat it anyway!" (laughs) He was anti-communist, although he was very pro-socialist, but he had deviated a little bit from his course, just a little bit. He wasn't the same guy that I used to know years ago when I was growing up but then neither am I, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Now, that was in 1952?

LUCIA: We went in 1950.

INTERVIEWER: And when you came back--it seems from the clipping that when you got back to Atlanta, they wanted you to go on a tour. You went on a speaking tour?

LUCIA: No, I came back to Atlanta, but then I went on to different places that I was visiting, working in Alabama somewhere, I'd always be.... I was told by the government that wherever I go, to see if I could get something in it. But, of course, they didn't always want to say that [Marshall Plan] (laughs) but to get the story across. It really was very interesting, though.

INTERVIEWER: So then for the next couple of years--when was it? Until 1956 . . .

LUCIA: Now, where do we go?

INTERVIEWER: Five or six years of organizing in the South, I guess.

LUCIA: 1946--well, this is still Atlanta. Of course, you know, I appeared.... You remember this: "The High Cost of...." "Before Sparksmen's Committee...." "Labor Vividly Presents the High Cost of Living".

INTERVIEWER: That was 1947.

LUCIA: 1947. Let's see what this is. "Reporting Committee on Organization in Atlanta for the State."

INTERVIEWER: "43rd Annual Convention of George Perry's Labor...." But it doesn't have a date on it.

LUCIA: It doesn't? There's a magazine section here.

INTERVIEWER: Are you getting kind of tired of this, because you've been doing it for over three hours now.

LUCIA: I'm not tired. Are you? You must be tired.

INTERVIEWER: I am.

LUCIA: How about another beer?

INTERVIEWER: I'd sort of like a cigarette. Would you mind if I smoked?

LUCIA: No. I'll tell you what. As long as you open the window.

(break in tape)

LUCIA: . . . conditions, what were the people doing, what were they thinking, what was the attitude of organized labor, and I haven't done that yet. You know what I mean? As I go along, even if you have to remind me of it, remind me of it because I think it's important because the atmosphere, the climate, it's so important to what happens. And if there is a gradual change, it's so darn gradual you can hardly see it. But there have been changes even if it's minimum wages, the question of medicare and things that haven't come up and what the unions have provided in their contracts. I haven't done any of that stuff at all. I think I'm going into just personal things, what I have done personally. I don't think that's so important as what that particular era made possible for us. I didn't mention the blacklist. The kind that we had when we were in Rochester. When the unions were young, every employer or Chamber of Commerce of every town had people on their list, people who were members of a union who were blacklisted and couldn't find a job, especially if they participated in a strike. The yellow-dog contract. You had to sign that you would have nothing to do with the union. Those, I think, are very important. The advent of the minimum wage. What I found in each city as I went what was the minimum wage earned. Of course, you know, as a union we could get very little. Our unions--needle trades--have always.... In the beginning of building, have been very difficult. First of all, our trade itself is not a rich trade. Ask Jim. Once you could put them out of business because anybody could start a hat shop or at least anybody used to start a hat shop. If you go in to Dallas you could start a hat shop, which meant that the shops in New York were particularly notoriously small, which made the work even more expensive and more difficult. Luckily, in the South, they were very large because the area made it possible. Now what made people go into these areas? Cheap labor, expense free, all kinds of overtures from the town itself, the Chambers of Commerce and the industries there to bring.... To be sure that there'd be no unions. That was the first thing. What

LUCIA: I had in Winchester, Tennessee--and that's the South!--long, long time, and the odds that were put out against us. And Joe got beaten up in Winchester, Tennessee, and so did one of our other organizers, Cora Valentine. And one of the interesting things in the South that I didn't find was any criticism of my name or the fact that I was born in Italy. I made no bones about it, you know. I thought I might just as well tell them about it at the onset. I said to them when they told me they were born in the South, "That's nothing new to me." I said, "After all, I was born in the south of Italy." (laughs) So that immediately dispelled any feeling of wanting to criticize me because I was foreign born. The work was interesting but I don't know about now. I tried it two, three years ago in New York. I wouldn't want to do it in New York. First of all, you don't know who's going in what building. You don't have access to them like you do in other centers. Not only that but there are so many aliens that you couldn't even get their name. Even if they understood it, you'd need an interpreter. They wouldn't give you the time of day. I don't know. Maybe I found it difficult because if I can't talk to them myself it was as though I'm not making a contact. That was the experience I had when I went to Florida. They sent me to Florida. I had the Cuban people to deal with. My Italian helped me somewhat but some of the words mean different things in Italian, so I had to be very careful that I was using the right word. But I did have an interpreter. But there, "Comunista, comunista!" The moment I said I came from the union, I was a communist. They had that reaction because of their men in Cuba. But still, we got two locals there. It was a miracle and it had nothing to do with me. I got the members to like me, but they wouldn't have voted for it. We got them through New York. You know, the runaway shops and the contacts were made in New York. So it's no credit to me that we got them. We got them through the union label drive, which was one of the things that we really used in spite of the fact that years and years ago it cost us a pretty penny for what they call the second ball car line. The strains of trade.

INTERVIEWER: The Danbury Hatters' Union, yeah.

LUCIA: But we had perfected the use of the union label to be able to use it against the employers without breaking the law. In other words, we were picketing the stores; not the stores themselves, but the product, which was permissible at the time. And I don't think that the Amalgamated or the ILG has been able to perfect it to the extent that we did. You see, they tried it at a number of places, and they didn't succeed, but that's how we finally got Texas, the Adams hat . . .

INTERVIEWER: The label . . .

LUCIA: The label did it, yeah. We kept the thing alive. I kept going there year in, year out. I spent some miserable months there. It was a one-horse town, no place to go and nobody to talk to, and far away from Dallas--about sixty miles. I mean, not a place

LUCIA: you could drop in on any time. But the people kept up their faithfulness all that time. We had three elections. We'd win the election and we couldn't get a contract and then they would challenge us again, hoping that in three or two years we may have lost our majority, so we had to reorganize again.

INTERVIEWER: One of the things that people say about organizing in the South is that it's so much more rural. The industry is in rural places outside the cities unlike the rest of the country.

LUCIA: Oh, they had to go forty miles, sixty miles--I don't know how they commuted every day. When we were in Garland, Texas, we used to have to go within a radius of sixty miles in order to get to members who we thought were important. They were scattered all over in these little one-horse towns, terribly hard.

INTERVIEWER: Also, because there's a lot of rural area, you know, most of the population is farmers and share-croppers, tenants. There are a lot more strike-breakers around, much more than you would have somewhere else in the country.

LUCIA: Sure. In Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, we had black people striking. I was naive to believe that black people wouldn't go through a picket line. I really thought that. Oh, I thought that there would be a few scoundrels but I didn't imagine that that would be an invitation for every Negro who was unemployed to go through that line. That strike lasted seven or eight months. In three or four days that place was full of scabs. And they were vicious. They were reaching down at the bottom of the barrel to get them. Prostitutes and people who had never worked and all kinds, only to break the spirit of the strike. The scabs would come with broken bottles in their hands. When they saw someone approaching them they could just as soon.... And I couldn't.... Here I had the NAACP helping out and giving out leaflets to people, I called all the clergymen to speak in their churches. But--and this was interesting--after the strike was over, the company thought they'll never get these people to vote for the union. I knew they would. You know why? Because they had promised them the moon in order to get them in to work. They didn't keep their promise. So they were fighting mad that the company broke their word. So when we went to visit them, they received us okay. The company wanted an election. We surprised them; we said, "We'll take it." And we won. But you know, we didn't get a contract until about three years later. And it was a lousy contract.

INTERVIEWER: One thing you seem to be saying is that very often when you organized, and you organized a place that hadn't been organized before, that didn't have any history of it, then you had to be careful of the strike-breakers, careful of the scabs, because they were potential members. You're not dealing with professionals at all, you're dealing with people who could've been workers themselves, very often. Did you feel.... Did they bring in.... Were you ever faced with professional strike-breakers, thugs . . .

LUCIA: But these were not professional, in most of these cases.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes, I understand what you're saying, but did you ever let . . .

LUCIA: The professional ones, that's different.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Have you had that experience?

LUCIA: I did have that experience. Well, once they go through the line and they go after three or four days, then there's a solidarity inside that they have to break, you know. I noticed that. That it's very hard, even though they're sympathetic and they like to make the break, then they're afraid that they're here nor there: "The strikers will hold it against us that we scabbed for four or five days and the others will hate us and especially if...." In a small town where they have to live together, there's all kinds of fears. But the fear of being fired, the worst part I saw, it was in Greenville, Alabama. That was the worst fear I have ever seen. Because the man who ran or owned the factory or ran the factory for the Hat Corporation of America owned the whole town. He was a banker, head of the bank, the department store was his, the judge in the courthouse was his cousin or something. They were all related. So they held the town in the palm of their hand. And I remember that one of our organizers who was beaten--Valentine, Cora Valentine was beaten up. The governor was big Jim Walton or Jim Folson--his daughter now is married to Wallace--but he was the governor. He was somebody that you could really talk to because when she was beaten up, Joe got in touch with him and he really told him off. I was in the hospital at the time and I had just had an operation. He told them, "Don't give Miss Lucia any newspapers, because she'll get out of bed." They kept papers from me and they didn't tell me until about a week afterwards. "The reason why we didn't tell you is that we were afraid you'd get your hat and coat and go out!" But Joe was beaten up. He was eating in the restaurant with one of the business agents from Atlanta and when he came out the men were waiting for him outside. And they beat him up. They hurt his nose and broke his glasses. Not too savagely because it was the main street in the town. Cora was--she's Christian Scientist. I said, "Didn't she hit them back?" She said, "Oh, no. You're not supposed to." I said, "I'd have kicked them, hollered until they heard me downtown."

INTERVIEWER: One thing that.... A lot of people that I've heard who've spent time in the South, especially in the fifties, said that the race thing really got worse after the Civil Rights--the Supreme Court decision--then the whites got much more sensitive to it, they were much more hostile. That was a testing point of everything all of a sudden.

LUCIA: It was. It was hard even to hold on to their.... I had a girl-friend in Atlanta while I was there at the time who said, "Oh, my Ada Mae"--her maid; you know, she treated her like a personal possession--"there's nobody like Ada Mae." One day Ada Mae didn't show up and somebody said they saw her in town and she wasn't sick

LUCIA: at all. They told it to me and my friend. And when she asked Ada Mae where she went, she said, "Well, I had a meeting." She said, "What kind of a meeting?" "An NAACP meeting." Well, that was the end of her job. For years and years, she had been in her service. I guess the feeling was that they couldn't stand it. It was a very, very violent reaction in the beginning and then it tapered off. I understand that.... You ought to know, because you've been there. Can't you tell.... Well, how long have you been there?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, only about five years.

LUCIA: Well, in five years you should've seen something.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you know, Jackson was elected, a black mayor.

LUCIA: Maybe it changes the other way now. I got letters from the same people. I got one from Robby Joe. She's tried.... And you wouldn't love it. Not anymore. This happens to them all the time. I was good to them. Jesus, we were afraid to open our doors, to dare look out. At night we were afraid. Along about that time in the South we had the safety meetings.

INTERVIEWER: It's becoming very much like any other big city except that it's cleaner.

LUCIA: Don't you find that the feeling is changing towards the Negroes? It's very hard to keep defending them. I defended one the.... I don't defend the Negro, I defend what's happened to them because of their background and their suffering. That doesn't go anymore, now. It used to be accepted more readily, and particularly by Jewish people, who used to be just the opposite. And they'd say, "Look what's happened to us, the beating we take. But we don't go killing anybody." I said, "But you could disappear if you wanted to. You could disappear. But these people can never change their complexion." And that's what they hate us for. It's because they got a permanent coloring that they don't like anymore. I'm finding it myself difficult to be as prone to protect them as I used to. I myself have changed. See, that was necessary. I wonder why.... It's alright now, they've had their revenge. But these people brought up in so much hatred. I'll tell you, when I went to Atlanta I was shocked. I had never had any dealings with black people. They were a mystery to me. Actually, they didn't even exist. That's the trouble. We didn't take pains to find out what was happening to them. The first thing, I was warned, you know. So I was once so open that I couldn't tell when I first went whether they were black or white by their accent. And every time I'd hear a Southern accent--it must be black, I'd be scared stiff. They got me so terrified that I could hardly walk without being frightened. Then what happened, I began to read. Actually there were some intelligent articles about the colored people in the Atlanta Constitution. With McGill there I began to change. What do you expect of people who for two hundred years had been treated like slaves? I began to change and try to under-

LUCIA: stand. I began to work with them and found that they were alright. They weren't that bad, they were just fighting for their rights. Well, one night I was going to the Ponsiana--it was a colored, a black night club on Auburn Street. I was going to a meeting. I was working nights with the Scripto workers--there's a Scripto Pencil Company there. I was told, "You can't go there alone." And I said, "Why?" "Because it's a Negro section and it's at night." I said, "Well, I can't get anybody to go with me, so I got to go alone." I got on the bus and the conductor said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the Ponsiana." "The Ponsiana! That's a black place. What're you doing, a white woman?" I tried to be smart. "How do you know I'm not black?" And he looked at me, "Well, you're pretty dark." And he looked funny, and he wasn't quite sure and he kept giving me dagger looks; "She must be white, she must be black, she must be white." I said, "Will you call it when I have to get off at such and such a street?" Well, he did. "You'll be lucky if you get back." Well, by the time I got inside, I was terrified. I thought, "Isn't that stupid of me to come? How do I know? I'm going into a black place. They're having a dance, they might have liquor." So I got upstairs and the policeman said, "Are you a white woman?" I said, "I'm not white." He said, "You're not one of those smart ones that keeps saying they're not white but just to get in?" "Well, I wouldn't say that if I was. I'm not white. I'm black." I can laugh now but I wasn't laughing after I got through with it! He began to tell me what they do to white women when they get drunk and how they stick out their razors and cut their insides out and their entrails. My hair curled that night! I didn't need a permanent the next day. I was so frightened. But when the intermission came--I was supposed to speak to them during intermission--intermission came around and a colored man who recognized me.... The main person there. He said, "Miss Lucia, you can come in now." And I went.... And they were very--don't get too close, give her time to breathe--very protective. But I got out of there and I couldn't find a cab. I wanted a cab in the worst way. I couldn't wait until I got out of there. I was just terrified. And I have a feeling that maybe they're doing the same thing to us here even in these apartments. We're getting.... Especially they're mugging older people. They follow them and then they get in the stairwell and when they hear the elevator door open, they come around out of the stairwell and.... We've had a lot of cases. So, what do you do? You can't stop trying to protect people, because there's always a vicious crowd in every movement. Even as far as the labor movement's concerned. Our hands weren't clean sometimes either, you know.

INTERVIEWER: I had a friend who was in a black apartment house . . .

LUCIA: Can I give you another beer?

INTERVIEWER: No, I'm going to go soon. There's just one or two things . . . (break in tape) This is the second day of interviewing Carmen Lucia. This is tape number five. You wanted to talk about things you said on the tape yesterday that you wanted to correct or modify?

LUCIA: Well, I have a feeling that I was trying to build myself up unconsciously, I guess. Or maybe it's become a habit now. I wasn't giving due credit to the work that was being done by my colleagues. It's true that I was in charge of most of the areas. In fact, all the areas that I mentioned I was in charge of. But I failed to mention some people who did some very fine work in the various situations I was in. And I was appalled last night when I kept reviewing in my own mind what I had said, that there was very seldom a time that I ever mentioned any of these people. For instance, there was John Kuliesh. We had quite a staff in Texas at one time. He later became vice-president, but he wasn't a vice-president at the time.

INTERVIEWER: And this was in the hat workers?

LUCIA: Well, he was from the hatters' union. He was from Danbury, Connecticut and he came over to help with Resistol, because when he started to organize Resistol in Longview.... It was at that shop where they make the bodies. That's where he was trained. He knew all about that kind of work. Well, what amused me was that he was appalled that most of the work now is being done by women. He said, "They can't do it. They can't lift those wet bodies. They weigh a ton." Well, I said, " You want to see?" So I brought him into the shop and showed him how the girls were lifting these big heavy boxes. I don't know how they picked them up. They were very, very heavy. They're full of water. And they'd pick up hundreds of bodies. Little, bitsy, tiny girls, 5 feet 2, weighing 98 pounds! Well, anyway, the hatters were of the opinion that nobody could make hats in the South and when they heard that he was moving from New Jersey to Longview, they didn't predict a long life for him. But John was excellent. Of course, he couldn't understand the Southern people and they couldn't understand the damn Yankee because he had a real Yankee brogue. And I, by that time, had gotten used to the Southern accent. It was amusing. They liked him very, very much. He was very personable and he was a hard worker, but he hated to be away from home. He got sick and in a short period of time he actually lost about twenty pounds. I had to call Alex up and tell him, "Take him away, the man's losing his health."

INTERVIEWER: Alex?

LUCIA: Alex--at the time--1957. And so he took him away for a short while and things began to patch. And I sent a message, "Don't be a damn fool like me, you make your deal beforehand." I told him how to make a stipulation that he has to go home every month for a period of time, because they never would let me go home. They said that I didn't have a husband. I had a child, but you know, the child didn't count. So I arranged that he plead his own case. And he did and it worked very nicely and he kept coming back and so forth, you know. Then we had Carl Otto, who became active later on, of course, after Corsicana was organized. He helped. He was on the team. Then we got help from the AF of L-CIO. They sent some of their organizers by the name of Sarge Kintsley, I think he was from Port Hood.

INTERVIEWER: Kintsley?

LUCIA: K-I-N-T-S-L-E-Y. Now, the reason why we had to have a larger staff was that while we had our office in Dallas, Texas we had Corsicana, 56 miles away. Now don't ask me if it's east or west because I've forgotten. Longview was 125 miles away from Dallas. Garland was only about eighteen miles away. So we had quite a radius to cover and they were large shops, because millinery shops were usually very small, but the men's hat industry plants were very large in comparison. So we had about six hundred, twelve hundred, about fifteen hundred--that's a lot of hat workers for the area, maybe more than that at the time, about two thousand all together, between Texas Millner and the others.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I think we got a.... Want me to guess? I know the chronology is a little weak. Let me go over where I think we are. You went to Atlanta in 1940 and you were in Atlanta from 1940 to 1956 you said?

LUCIA: Yeah, but while I was in Atlanta I was going to Greenville, Alabama. I was loaned out to everybody who had troubles. There wasn't enough work for me in Atlanta. I mean, not in our field in millinery. So that they could utilize me from time to time in various places. So I went to.... Let's see if I can give you an idea. No, I'm not going to go through this because I'll get involved in other things. So a full-length time in Texas was from 1957 to about 1963.

INTERVIEWER: So for about six years then.

LUCIA: Yeah, six years. But I had been in Corsicana and I had been in Garland in 1937 or 1938, whatever period of time. So I kept going there because we had.... Well, we had Arbol Lynch, too. I did mention him.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LUCIA: Arbol Lynch was a Texas boy who came out of one of the millinery shops and we trained him. He was an excellent organizer, very handsome man, blond, blue-eyed, and Southern in every respect except.... Yeah, he hated the Negroes as much as the others did. He had to undergo a terrific transformation, but he did it. So, he was stationed where he could be reached as a contact man while I was going different places. So if anything happened, he'd reach me, and if I was needed, I'd go. That's how we got wind of the fact that in Garland.... The people in Rolnick wanted a union through him. He already had about fifteen members by the time I got there. And he and I worked on going.... See, one of the things that the needle trade is famous about . . .

INTERVIEWER: Is that Byer Rolnick, the company?

LUCIA: Yeah, Byer Rolnick.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know how to spell it?

LUCIA: B-Y-E-R R-O-L-N-I-C-K. That was the strike in 1939 that we had. I said that they only had one pickle factory there and the only shop there was there at the pickle factory. I'm retrogressing. I'm talking about Arbol Lynch. That's why I wanted to give you background on how he came about. So he turned out to be quite useful in the organization work. Later, when we lost the election, he wanted to make a change. We weren't paying enough money. You know, we couldn't afford to pay what other unions paid. He got a chance to go to another union--I think it's the Chemical Workers' Union--and he developed into a full-fledged.... I think he became an international vice-president later on, many years after. So there were other people in M&B--but I'll come to those people afterwards. I won't mention them all now. Do you want me to mention as I go on to each situation the people that worked with me?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, if you want to.

LUCIA: Now, at M&B, the day before the strike . . .

INTERVIEWER: When you say M&B, when and where . . .

LUCIA: Oh, M&B is in Richmond, Virginia. He had a huge plant of about five hundred, no, about four hundred workers. They were on government orders, too. Besides regular caps they were doing government caps as well.

INTERVIEWER: And when was this?

LUCIA: In 1957 or 1958. Can I take a peek? (laughs) Didn't leave enough space to even know what I was . . . (tape interference) M&B, 1949, 1948 to 1949.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sorry. You were talking about the morning of the strike.

LUCIA: I was told.... I had done work before, you know, and I had organized one shop. We had tried to organize this shop years before. We had won the election but couldn't get a contract. So the people wouldn't go on strike. So we kept going back to the Labor Board and the morning that the strike was to be called, I had the signs all ready waiting for them. It was in the winter-time, too. And in Virginia it can get pretty cold. And nobody showed up. So the strike never took place. So then, later on, when they were doing government work, Alex Rose, President Alex Rose, thought this was a good idea now--with Lyndon Johnson in the White House, and government work and so forth and so on--maybe we'll get somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: So this is later on in 1963?

LUCIA: The strike took place in 1963. We went in in 1949, we had three elections in that shop. We won each time but we couldn't get a

LUCIA: contract. Finally, in 1963, we called a strike. And it was the most beautiful sight you ever saw. It was 100 percent strike the first morning. We had a picket line all around the building. And the police were there on horseback and the company was there snapping pictures. I pulled some of my girls and I said, "Listen, Helen, you told me you wouldn't go in." And the boss came out and pulled her other arm and said, "Now, don't listen to this lady, she's going to get you in trouble." It really was something. And anyway, we got them all in. With the exception of about two or three. Now remember, 90 percent of them were black. The ten percent were white. We were very weak. But we managed to pull. At least the first day we had all the white people out, because some of them were afraid. The second day, then they began to go back. But we didn't lose too many. But I was ill-prepared, as I told you yesterday, and disappointed that the colored people didn't feel the impact of the Civil Rights movement at a time like this. We got leaflets out for them. We passed them out as they were coming into work. We went to see the NAACP and . . .

INTERVIEWER: You're talking about the scabs?

LUCIA: Yeah, the scabs. There was very little violence on our picket line there because I didn't encourage it. In fact, the boys who came from New York--we had a staff meeting and they said, "What are you letting them go in for? You're singing to them!" I said, "Listen boys, you're not in New York, you're in the South." Well, they swore that the next day they were going to.... I said, "You get fresh the next day on the line and you're going to get an injunction slapped on you. We'll have only about three people at the door. That's what's going to happen." Well, they knew better. So they started to be a little rough the next morning. It was only the beginning. And sure enough, we got an injunction served on us. Luckily, we had a judge who was very sympathetic. When our lawyer was trying to tell him that I was very radical and that I had been to the NAACP, he says, "Well, what's wrong with her going to anybody to appeal for help? After all, she's representing black people." So he had to cut that out anyway from the injunction. He said, "Well, we're going to limit it. You can't have it all around the factory." And we did for a couple of days and then we were back again. But then we had to separate the pickets. We had regular picket lines and regular shifts. Each one was given a regular period of time. Luckily, we found diagonally across the street a restaurant that was going out of business that had chairs and a music box and everything. So we rented the whole thing. And they kept going back and forth and we fed them, we had a soup kitchen working. But that lasted.... Now, that was called on July 8, I think. The week of July 4 was their regular vacation. And we didn't go back. No, it couldn't have been, because they were working and we had to stop them. They had gone back after their vacation period. We didn't want them to lose their vacation period. That was it. They went back right after the vacation, but it was understood that.... The Sunday before, we had a mass meeting and we met with all the people. We had a tremendous turn out and it looked very good.

LUCIA: The ILG lent us the use of their hall free of charge and every day we'd have a meeting, every single day we'd talk to them. I'd always get up and say, "I don't have a thing to say." It took me an hour to tell them that I didn't have a thing to say! (laughs) Because you had to keep the spirit alive all the time. Let's see, that was in July. By September.... Oh, in the meantime, under the Virginia law--they had the Right to Work law--and conditions were very bad in Virginia and it made wages very low and the resistance to unions was the same as anywhere else in the South. At least they didn't try any violence there--the employers--like they did in Winchester and different places. By about the middle of September I was notified by the office that we'd have to cut down on the amount of pickets. We were paying them twenty dollars a week. That was a lot of money. Three hundred people plus the extras. You know, there's always extras. Alex said, "We just can't continue. We're taxing all our locals and they're getting tired of being taxed left and right." The morning of the strike our international secretary-treasurer, Al Slope, told them that we're going to keep this up until hell freezes over, and he said, "No one will suffer as a result." I said, "I'm not going to be the one to tell them that we're cutting it off. I don't think it's my place to. I'm not the international treasurer. And I think I was right. Nobody wanted to do it. It was dirty work. Well, he made a speech and then he made another mistake. Al came and he made another mistake and he said, "But there'll be exceptions. And I'll let Carmen use her judgement about the exceptions." Well, all the people that didn't get any money were the exceptions. I was hounded and I almost got hysterical that day. I couldn't make them understand. I said, "Listen, he meant in very, very rare cases." "Well, mine is rare, mine is rare!" In some instances it was true. So later on they cut again. It kept reducing itself. Because we couldn't get to first base with this company, and I want to say this. I'm going to say it off the record. Should I stop it?

INTERVIEWER: Do you want me to stop it?

LUCIA: Well, you listen for just a minute. (break in tape)

INTERVIEWER: Okay, we're talking about Alex and L.B.J.

LUCIA: Realizing that L.B.J. and our international president, Alex Rose, were friends. In fact, L.B.J. invited Alex Rose.... He was the first labor leader to be invited into the White House and that meant that there was a closeness between the two. I thought that, inasmuch as we were handling, or we were suffering, as a result of the discrimination against our people on government work, that I would ask Alex to intervene, to use his persuasive powers to get some help from L.B.J. and the quarter-master from Philadelphia and all that sort of thing. I called Alex up and I explained this to him and he said, "I'm sorry Carmen, but I'm not going to.... I haven't asked for any favors. It's true, we are friends and I admire L.B.J. a lot, but I'm not going to use my personal relationship with him." And I did say, "I don't know what good it is to

LUCIA: know a President if you can't use him!" And then I heard that there was a Bookbinder, a Mr. Bookbinder, from the Amalgamated, that used to be the right-hand man of somebody in the White House, I don't remember who. And I called him and do you know what he said? He said, "Well, why are you calling me? Why don't you call Alex?" I didn't dare tell him that Alex wasn't going to do it. I tried different people, but I couldn't. Well, the strike.... In the meantime, I was suffering from a terrible earache--childhood trouble that I had had in this left ear, you know, runny ear when you were a little girl. I'd let it run. And all through the years, from time to time, it would erupt like Vesuvius, you know? (laughs) I got terrible earaches. The pain was excrutiating. I kept going to this doctor who didn't know how to treat it. So finally someone told me of a specialist, because I couldn't stand the pain. I used to run around like this on the picket line, you know. And he looked at me and he said, "I think you'd better go and have an X-ray." I went and had an X-ray and I brought back the X-ray and he said, "I suggest you immediately have an operation. Your mastoid bone has been terribly infected and has to be removed." Well, a mastoid operation for a woman my age was very unusual. I went to Rochester and I had the mastoid operation performed. I had to leave the line. It nearly broke my heart. That's where . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, what's his name? Lynch?

LUCIA: No, from Pennsylvania. Harry Fromkin, who had been on the picket line all along with us, was put in charge while I was undergoing the operation and was convalescing. In the meantime, he was ordered to cut down again until it got to the point where they had about fifteen pickets. By that time--it was winter, in January, from July to January. And do you know that there were some people who refused to give up the picket line? They said, "Even if you don't pay us, we're going to stay." Six of them! One was a girl that had been fired, whose case we had taken up to the Labor Board. There were two girls that were fired. And when I went back, she was still on the line. The Labor Board got in touch with me to pick up the check for the two girls. Nine thousand dollars in back pay for the two girls. You can imagine how.... I said, "I'm not going to give you that check unless you promise that you'll go on the picket line." I was afraid if I'd.... They wouldn't give it to me to make an.... Well, I wanted the original anyway.... "Go on the picket line and show the girls on the picket line that you finally got the money." I wanted them to believe in us. Well, Mr. Bigler, the employer, he happened to be outside during the lunch hour and I wish I could have taken a picture then. I could even imitate her. She said, "Mr. Bigler, I want to thank you." (laughs) I called up the radio station and they came down and took pictures of the girls. We also got all the clergymen together, the colored and white clergy together. They let us open up.... They helped us take care of the children of the pickets while they were picketing--I think I'm going back again. I'm never very coherent about these things--and I went to one of their services. It was the most beautiful service that I have ever been to. I wouldn't mind going to church every Sunday! (laughs) First of all,

LUCIA: they're very theatrical, the speakers. This one happened to be especially good. He had a terrifically large congregation, about twelve hundred that Sunday. And a lot of the scabs were going to be at the church, too. I didn't call them scabs, I called them strike-breakers. They gave me a chance to speak to the congregation. But when they came in.... Have you ever been to a.... Oh, this was magnificent; their voices were wonderful. I've heard them sing before when I was organizing doll workers and laundry workers--that's another group that I forgot to tell you about in Atlanta. They sing in cohesion and harmony and beautiful, magnificent voices and they helped us, they really did. And Hill--I think was the attorney here, the white attorney or the agitator or something, for the NAACP--he came down and made a speech.

INTERVIEWER: Herbert Hill.

LUCIA: Yeah, Herbert Hill. He does represent the NAACP, doesn't he?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, he's their national.... Oh, Laver . . .

LUCIA: Laver! Laver! Oh, I couldn't think who it was. You meet so many people in the course of travels. Well, to make a long story short, the strike petered out. But we had managed to do this: we told the people when they went on strike--I did--to go and register every week for unemployment insurance. I knew the Virginia law said you can't get any unemployment insurance no matter how long you're out on strike. And I went to the Labor Board. "You can't get it, you can't get it." I said, "Well, what have you got to lose? I don't know what may happen." There was only one thing that I could use. As soon as they saw that the girls weren't coming back, the company sent a letter saying that "you have been replaced as of.... Unless you return by such and such a date, you will be replaced." Then they sent out another letter: "You have been replaced." So I took the position that they might have had a change of heart and they couldn't go back because.... Anyway, those that took my advice got back unemployment insurance. I said, "Well, that's establishing a precedent for you people." Well, then when it quieted down, I said to.... The company, thinking we were weakened.... Very few of our people went back, about one hundred. Some of them didn't want to go back. They said, "Who wants to go back into that hell-hole? The scabs will be nasty to us." We got back about one hundred people out of the four hundred that went back and I said, "Now, look. Go back as though you won this fight." Those that wanted to go back were given the opportunity by the Labor Board to respond by such and such a date. "Now you go back, even though it's without a contract." And I said, "Work like hell trying to get those scabs to join the union." Because I had a feeling that the company would petition for an election, thinking, "Now the union doesn't have a majority anymore." So they did petition for an election. Well, the campaign started all over again. So I was glad that I was nice to the scabs. "Oh, yes, you were always nice." I said, "I was always nice to you. I tried very hard. But you know when you're out like that, out of work, you can't blame the girls." By that time they were disgusted with the company. Well, the company never,

LUCIA: never expected that they would lose that election. But they did. We won. But you know, we didn't get a contract until 1965. Negotiating and negotiating. It was the lousiest contract you ever could get. I was terribly ashamed of it. I was glad my signature wasn't on it. Then, of course, we had the ILG send their man in and we went piecework. And I knew piecework would be murder in that shop with the kind of employer we had. The man came from the ILG--they loaned us the man--he was a price setter, whatever you call them. And he looked over the work. He looked over the prices and he thought it was fair, so we had to take his word for it; but it wasn't at all. And then the discrimination. They gave good work to the old-timers and so forth and so on. We really lost that situation after a long period of time. But we didn't abandon it until the contract expired and we tried to renew it and make it better. By that time, they didn't have government work and they were making coats instead of caps. And luckily we didn't have a hot fight with the Amalgamated. But they had some of our cap shops. They were making caps in some of their shops, we were making coats in some of ours. And that's the end of M&B. But M&B started way back in 1939, and it went on with the same shop where we had an election--won, but as I said before, we couldn't get a contract. So it was an old, old fight for about twenty years. We spent a fortune on that. We never got anything out of it. Their dues were very low--$1.75 a month, or something like that. Well, you know with what they were making, we were lucky we got that. That's the extent of M&B.

INTERVIEWER: So it's still there, still unorganized?

LUCIA: It's still unorganized. The union, as I said, you know.... Nobody wants to stay in these places. Besides, it costs money, too. They don't have the money now to organize. What little is left they need it for the staff. It's too little. Who wants to go and bury themselves in one of these towns, you know? Oh, Virginia is wonderful. I love Virginia. When you go into a town like Corsicana, Texas or Winchester, Tennessee or Greenville, Alabama, God help you. That's another story. Now which one do you want to hear next?

INTERVIEWER: I don't think we can go into every one. What I'd like to do is, first of all, I just want to get the chronology straight. You were located in different places. Actually you went all over the place. In general, you were in the South from 1940 until the . . .

LUCIA: Until I left in about 1950. 1950? From 1940? Well, I had been in the South before.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, in Dallas.

LUCIA: So it's very hard. But actually, when I moved to Atlanta, that was my headquarters. And out of the Atlanta headquarters I went to all these different places. By the way, I did move out of there for a very short while. The company--union--sold me a bill of goods because I was kicking like hell that I was being buffeted

LUCIA: around like a football. And I said, "I think you're unfair. You're putting me in places where it was almost insufferable for a person to be in. A little, little town like Greenville, Alabama. That's no place to go. Nothing to do. All you could do is talk shop to the people you have in the factory. There's nobody else . . ."

(break in tape)

LUCIA: I was in both strikes and I don't remember the years.

INTERVIEWER: No, we got that in Joe Jacobs' stuff.

LUCIA: Well, then, you can get that from that.

INTERVIEWER: This is where the employer did a whole thing about how he was going to close the shop, he was going to leave it.

LUCIA: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And he didn't mean a word of it. Just a show.

LUCIA: No, he was.... I think he committed suicide, or something happened to the employer. Yeah, I think he committed.... Listen, by the way, I got, I have--off the record--(laughs) (break in tape) In Fruitfarm, Alabama.... Which one? Where was I when I got called? I suppose I was somewhere on the road. Oh, I was in Texas because Joe Jacobs got a piece of brown paper bag--I don't know whether he talked to you about it--with signatures from the workers of the Wolverine Cap Company. The Wolverine Cap Company wanted to be organized. They had heard about him through some other persons. He called me up right away quick because I was home for the holidays in Atlanta--it was over the Christmas holidays. He called me and he told me, "We've got a job for you." I said, "The hell you have! So has Alex!" He told me about it. And I said, "I'm sorry, Joe, I can't possibly leave the situation that I'm working on now. You'd better call Alex and find out who he should send." And he did call Alex and Alex sent Drucker--now, what was his first name?--Drucker from St. Louis to look after the situation.

INTERVIEWER: What year was this again, when it first started? Do you remember? I know it went on for a long time.

LUCIA: I really don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think we've got it in the files.

LUCIA: I go to so many places. It's really pretty hard to remember. See, I don't have clippings on it. That's why I wasn't able to remember. I probably didn't take the time, I was in such a hurry. But I was there for the length of the strike. No, I wasn't in that particular strike until the tail-end of it. They had help from Dennis Adams, who came from the Rubber Workers'

LUCIA: Union. And between Drucker and Dennis Adams they called a strike. The people were magnificent there. They'd go out on strike at the drop of a hat. They didn't need any urging because the rubber workers.... You know, they had the husbands and the brothers supporting the various unions. And they walked the picket line and they boycotted the town. The town was terribly anti-union in spite of the rubber workers. So they took their trade.... Every Saturday they'd take their cars and park in front of the stores where they usually shopped, get in the car and off they'd go to a nearby town and do their shopping, which of course hurt the town quite a bit. The boycott was very effective. The company signed. Now when the agreement expired.... I was there for a very short while, made speeches, got acquainted with the girls, prepared lunches and things like that. Then the second time when the agreement expired, the company had changed hands. Then this fellow Brown--I think his name was Brown--came in. He didn't want to sign it. He didn't want to have anything to do with the union. I was called.... Called the strike again. I went back. That time I stayed throughout the entire period of the strike. But it got to the point where he wouldn't sign a contract. Joe would try very hard to get him. I could see the idea of bringing him. He liked me; he said, "You're a nice girl. The others, I can't talk to." I said, "You're a nice guy, too." (laughs) I said, "Listen, did you go to New York very much?" He said, "No." I said, "Would you like to go to New York? How about your going to New York?" "Why?" Very quickly I added, "For the union"--I could see he was thinking maybe I was propositioning him! (laughs)--"because then, you could have a talk with Al Smoke and meet the president, the international president. You have an opportunity, your expenses will be taken care of." I wasn't sure whether they would be or not. But I thought that that was cheaper than continuing a strike. But it worked, you know that? He came down, they settled the strike and they went back. But I think later on something else happened there but I wasn't involved. Maybe Joe could tell you. You see, Joe has the advantage of all this material at his fingertips. He's got the files and everything in the New York office. But then, we had the habit of not putting anything on paper much. We used to call up. Whether they made notations about what took place, I don't know, at the international office. So that's Fruitfarm, Alabama.

(break in tape)

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk a little bit about those three major ones that we have the files on. Tell me about Winchester.

LUCIA: Winchester, Tennessee started when the Hat Corporation of America in Norwalk, Connecticut decided they were going to move the straw department to a Southern town. Well, it took some time for the union to find out where the Southern town was. And they landed in Winchester, Tennessee. So they sent me down.

INTERVIEWER: About what time was this?

LUCIA: That was.... Oh, I thought I had it. I think it was in the forties. I'll look it up. Greenville, 1945, 1946.

INTERVIEWER: So that was just after the War then?

LUCIA: Yeah. So I didn't know a soul, I didn't know how to go about it. I didn't know what the atmosphere was so I asked Joe Jacobs if he had any contacts with any unions close by. He says, "Yes, I do, in Talahoma," which was about fifteen to twenty miles from Winchester, Tennessee where they were building these wind tunnels--you know, government work. And he had helped in contract work with the Wilson--the maker of the golf balls. He said, "I know one of the men there. I think he's a secretary of that particular union. You go and see him and tell him I sent you. See if he knows anybody." Oh, yeah, he knows somebody, he's got a friend, a very good friend. "I can't tell you his address, because he lives out in the country." All these people live out in the country. There are no streets, you know, in these little bitsy towns. He said, "Just go and look on the map and see where such and such a little town is--it it's on the map--or ask anybody." So the following morning I went. And who do you suppose I strike when I go into the home? The wife alone. But she was the sister-in-law of the foreman in the shop, in the hat shop. But it happened that her brother and her were sympathetic. She said, "Gee, I wish the husband was here because he's been pro-union for a long time, but his brother, of course, has a job now and he hates to stick his neck out in any form or fashion." I said, "I'll come back tomorrow. In the meantime, do you know anybody that can give me some names and addresses? Don't give me people that you think might be anti-union, because it's a bad start." "Yeah," she said, "I got a woman friend, very close friend, Robbie McCullum, you'll probably come across her name sooner or later." Well, Robbie, bless her heart, oh, she greeted me as though I were a long lost friend. And she lived right opposite the factory up on a hill. And we became very good friends. She said, "I'll work up the girls and get names and addresses. In the meantime, I got some names and addresses of the men you can go to see." And sure enough.... I went there on March 3. I think some time in April I called Alex up and told him that I got a majority of the people. The company didn't even know I was in town until the day that I passed out leaflets and announced that we were going to have a meeting. That's how quiet they kept it. It was a very good group. And even the hotel people--who are still my friends, by the way--the hotel was a dinky old wooden place, you know, with the doors with the little key you could open any door. But the people that ran it were lovely people, young people. Naturally, she knew what kind of work I was in. I said, "I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't mention it to anybody. Just tell them that I'm making a survey for the government without explaining what it is." Well, there was a man in the hotel there who was with the lumber workers in the nearby town. He was a Ku Klux Klanner. And he was curious. He was always curious as to what I was doing--government work? What was I doing? At the time of the meeting, we had company surveillance that night and then we had tornado warnings and the people showed up just the same. Tornados are very frequent around

LUCIA: that part of the country, and I thought, "This'll kill our meeting." And the company sent spies out and the foreman was around and the manager--whoever he was--was there, Marvick. And I went outside in all the rain and took the number of the car and I said, "I'm going to get you in trouble. You're violating the law. Scared the liver out of him!" And I came back. I asked the people to go out and look and see that they would notice that the car was there and that they were surveying the place. Well, anyway, we made terrific inroads and we decided to hold an election. In the meantime, they were experienced from Norwalk, Connecticut and they thought, "Gee, we're getting away from the union." They intended piecemeal to get away from the union. I said, "If we strengthen, we got a fight." So here we had a union contract in Norwalk, Connecticut and they were fighting us in Winchester, Tennessee. In the meantime, the man who ran the town, it was a man who had the drugstore. His name was Mr. Prince--he wasn't a prince of a man, but his name was Prince. He was a first-class louse. He got the names, the roster of the names from the company. The Chamber of Commerce and he went out every night. I don't know who.... Whether I'd go before him or after him, but it seemed that we'd bump into each other. They did home visiting just like we did. Then they began to get very disagreeable and I began to get nuisance calls at two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning. It was very, very bad. "Get out of town, we don't want people like you. We can do without you," and so forth. Threatening. The company saw that we weren't.... They weren't getting to first base, they weren't intimidating the people. So they decided to close the plant for a couple of weeks to take inventory. But that wasn't the reason. A couple of weeks of shut-down, the rumor got around that this was only the beginning, that the moment the union comes in, they're going to move out of here. "They can't keep moving, because no matter where they move, we're going. I'll be there ahead of them to greet the people that they're going to hire." We had a luncheon at Robbie's house, right opposite the factory. I used to practically live there. She was a God-send to me. I had somebody at least I could talk to, one person, very warm and intelligent. We had a chicken dinner before they'd go to vote. So I counted the people who came around for the chicken. They were all our members. Can't lose! Everybody's eating our chicken. We got it made. And lo and behold, we lost by five votes. Five people in that audience were dishonest with us or dishonest with themselves. By five votes, we lost. So then the plant itself, their contract ended in Norwalk, expired. And they were to renew it. Now before you people sign a contract, you use that as a wedge to get back. In the meantime, we filed charges and so forth and so on. And Robbie had been fired in the meantime. Before the strike, she had already been fired. Presumably her work wasn't any good, although she had been taught to train people to do the work. So she called me that night and she said, "I think I'm going to be fired tomorrow." I said, "Why?" "They're finding fault with my work and tearing all the hat bands and putting them on the tree."--the rack, they used to call them 'the tree'. And sure enough, she was fired. So we filed charges and

LUCIA: had her go and register for unemployment insurance. They disqualified her and I appealed it. I said, "I don't think it's fair to disqualify her when we don't know what the outcome of the case is going to be." So, anyway, two years later--I think it took almost two years. The poor thing went through hell in that town. Even the church people disowned her. Her husband, a good sort, had this little country store down at the bottom of the hill opposite the factory and he used to depend on the hat people to give him some trade. They all owed him money, besides. He couldn't make a go of it. So I said to the union, the international, "We owe this family something, we can't penalize both of them." So we did what we could for them. At least they didn't suffer too much. But when the strike was settled and the case came through in the meantime, she was awarded back pay. I think it was close to three thousand dollars and she also got her unemployment insurance because they said that she had been fired unreasonably, in violation of the law. Well, she decided that she was going to build another home and call it the Union Home. "That's my Union Home," she said. She built one next door. They had a lot, you know, these people had lots, it would cost a fortune if you put it all together. And she built a little place, a modern, beautiful little place. I wouldn't have minded having it myself but not in that town. But she wasn't happy. She wanted to go back to her old home where she had lived all her married life. She rented it and then eventually she sold it. But when she got back, when they put her back to work, the contract hadn't been signed yet. She went back before the contract was signed. They began to pick on her again. So I was in Richmond, Virginia and I got a call; "I'm going to quit, Carmen, I'm going to quit!" I said, "That's what they want you to do. For two years you starved, you took all kinds of punishment. Show them that you don't care. And tell them that you called Carmen Lucia." I don't know why, but my name used to strike terror. I didn't mean it that way, but that's what used to actually happen. They were afraid of me. "Tell them, 'I just called Carmen Lucia long distance and she said that if you don't stop fooling around with me, she's going to file another charge.'" And you know, they quieted down. She was accepted. She became the chairlady and they got a union shop agreement. Things began to blossom and we had a nice relationship. Then, years later, we did have a strike. I went back to talk to the people. By that time, it was Mike Smith who was in charge of that area--Winchester, Tennessee. I was to make a speech to the strikers. There had been some resistance. The Teamsters' union--that's where the Teamsters' fit into that fight--Hoffa. His case was being heard at the time in Memphis, Tennessee. So he had a special antipathy towards our union and justifiably from his point of view. I say justifiably because Alex Rose was on the committee to oust the unions. He was the chairman of that particular committee in the AF of L convention, in the AFL-CIO convention. Not only did he vote with the committee, but he made an extemporaneous speech urging the delegates to accept the decision of the committee to oust the fur workers and all the people that were discredited. And he had never forgotten. So here, when he learned from his boys

LUCIA: that the contract was going to expire in the Hat Corporation and he was in Texas, in Winchester, Tennessee, he thought they ought to do something about it and see if they can't get it. So, Smith, for some unknown reason, didn't seem to sense the danger. But Robbie called up and she said, "I think the Teamsters are trying to get in." Well, Mike finally accepted the fact that the Teamsters were in. They already had sufficient evidence to go ahead. And they were holding back because under the law, you have to wait a certain period of time to be able to petition for an election while there's a contract still in effect. Well, this is one time when we worked in collusion with the employer. They didn't want the union! We didn't want the union. We had radio programs and we had all kinds of leaflets that went out and letters accompanied them at the same time. We finally won that election, which wasn't surprising considering that it was a double-barrelled election. But it could've gotten rough. Apparently they had plenty of money to spend, you know, and had made a lot of promises to people. Oh, when I.... The union said, "We'll send Carmen. Who knows Winchester better than Carmen?" That was the first time in my life that I was booed! They had found out that I was going. The hall was so full that they had to put amplifiers outside so that they could hear it from the outside. When I got up, the company.... Not the company, the Teamsters had sent them down, you know, people to boo me. I was so surprised. It was a revelation to me. I kept on talking. They were critical and I said, "Where were you, so many years ago when I was faced with...." I told them the story about Mr. Prince. I had invited him to a discussion. He didn't come; he refused to come. The Chamber of Commerce fought us very bitterly not to have the union and so forth. Well, anyway.... So what happened? Oh, they had the strike. They won the strike. They got union recognition and finally, years later, they closed up because the hat business had settled. It had nothing to do with the union. Now there is no hat factory there in Winchester, Tennessee.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so that was Winchester. What about Greenville?

LUCIA: Greenville was very early in the game. Did I say 1945? Was I talking about Greenville or about . . .

INTERVIEWER: Winchester.

LUCIA: Winchester.

INTERVIEWER: You said that was the time after you came back from Norwalk.

LUCIA: Well, Winchester was a different date, wasn't it? 1955 in Tennessee . . .

INTERVIEWER: That's when you went.... So it actually started in 1952 then.

LUCIA: Oh, it actually started in 1952. And then in 1967 was when the Teamsters came in. See how hard it is for me to keep track? That's it. 1952--it took that long. And if it wasn't for the strike in....

LUCIA: By the way, there was a very expensive strike for the hatters. I think it cost them a million or two million, I don't know, to keep the thing alive. The company wanted to move. They had made a promise that they'd only move when they had first moved the straw department to Winchester. They had made a promise that that was the only thing that was going to move. But then they started talking about moving another division. That's when the union thought, "We'd better do something to save Norwalk." So they decided to pool strength. It was very successful but it lasted a long time. There was all kinds of publicity when the AF of L-CIO became involved. It was the kind of strike that was very unusual to prevent a company from moving, but the hatters were carrying the brunt of the fight. That's why it took so long. I did say the Hat Corporation, didn't I?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think so. That was the name of the company.

LUCIA: Yeah, the Hat Corporation of America. They were the ones that made the Knox and the Dobbs hats. It's known in Norwalk as Crawford and Knapp. Now do you think we got enough on Winchester?

INTERVIEWER: How about Greenville?

LUCIA: June 27, 1946. There was an editorial. Well, let me see--how did I get started in Greenville? The hotel was flush with the railroad track, just flush with the railroad track. And my window, my bedroom window was.... I could shake hands with the engineer as it rumbled by. It shook the whole building. It was a bitterly anti-union town, very, very bitter. I think I mentioned this before, I may have yesterday in talking to you, that . . . (break in tape)

INTERVIEWER: . . . about how you got into it.

LUCIA: When I was told that there was a shop in Greenville, Alabama there was Blanche of Amesbury, Massachussetts, which was the Merrimack Hat Company.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what year was this in, roughly?

LUCIA: I don't know. My memory.... Oh, about 1946 and 1947. I was at this hotel where the man and woman were so nice to me and I made an appearing.... I told them who I was and I made them promise that they wouldn't reveal my identity, that I wasn't ready for it.

INTERVIEWER: Is this Greenville or Winchester?

LUCIA: I'm getting mixed up again, I'm sorry. Greenville, Alabama. How did I make the contact there? I can't remember how I got started. I think I went to the front of the shop and followed a few people home, which is generally done. I can't really say how it started.

INTERVIEWER: But we can skip over that.

LUCIA: I made my contact and inside of a few months we were able to get some reaction from the company. The first reaction we got was an editorial in the Greenville Advocate and it was presumably anti-union: "Stop and think what would happen if the union came in. It doesn't help the people...." and so forth and so on. Then we all had a stake in it--the series of editorials. I had had no experience in the back shop of the union. No, I want to take that back; I did too. Well, anyway, to make a long story short, we petitioned for an election. We won the election but the company challenged it on the basis that we interfered with them that we threatened and this, that and the other thing. I had somebody assisting me there who was very knowledgeable in the work of this company who was the business agent in Amesbury, Massachussetts for the parent body. He was able to go around and talk to these people about their work, what they pay in Amesbury. He was terrific for that sort of thing. I did the part of educating them but he did the basic work because that's more important to them--what they hear about their prospective jobs.

INTERVIEWER: There was the initial election and the company petitioned to get it set aside?

LUCIA: Yeah. We were set aside as a collective bargaining agent and we asked for a meeting to do collective bargaining. The company refused and we had to go back to the Labor Board to fight on that question--the refusal to bargain in good faith--that's when Cynewski came in again, because he had gone back and then he came in to help. We got Cora Valentine . . .

INTERVIEWER: Who was this that came in? Zadusky?

LUCIA: C-Y-N-E-W-S-K-I. I said he was a business agent from Amesbury. Frank Cynewski, a very fine person. He did a very good job there. And Cora Valentine was hired in the meantime. I was taken ill and I landed in the hospital. Joe said, "Conveniently so!" They were after me! (laughs) The girls that beat up Cora Valentine were really after me. Cora was beaten up, not severely but she was beaten up.

INTERVIEWER: How old was she?

LUCIA: I would say she was in her sixties.

INTERVIEWER: She was from Florida?

LUCIA: Well, she was from Atlanta. She had moved from Miami to Atlanta. But they beat her up while I was in the hospital. Joe wanted to get her out of the hotel. He was afraid to leave her there. So he called up Governor Folson to tell him the story. There was a.... It's one time when the labor movement in the South got terrific publicity. I said to Cora, "I got beaten up in Chicago and they didn't even put me in the paper! You got in all over the South!" Oh, just reams of stuff--"A Woman Beaten Up"--you know. They were beating up organizers anyway all along. The

LUCIA: Amalgamated--some got beaten up there, too. He said he'd have her escorted, police escort. So when she came out of the hotel.... By the way, the hotel people were in cahoots with them. They could've warned her that they were going up but they didn't.

INTERVIEWER: So they actually beat her up in the hotel?

LUCIA: Sure, oh yeah. And so the police on motorcycles came to the hotel. And she was escorted out in grand style. (laughs) Well, anyway, I got better, I went back to Greenville . . .

INTERVIEWER: When was Joe Jacobs beaten up?

LUCIA: Joe Jacobs was beaten.... Let me see if he was beaten up before or after she.... No, Joe Jacobs was beaten up before. That I know. And then she was beaten up later. Let's see if I have when she was beaten up. Look at the story they got. Joe'd have a fit if he saw this: "Woman Unionist Steps in After Man Organizers Run Out of Town" (pause) By the way, the Labor Board man, Levis, the hearing officer, was charged with collusion. They tried to say that he favored the union side, you know. And they brought charges against him. But that Greenville case was memorable for one more reason that the labor movement will remember. It was when they had the captive audience. It used to be taboo. That was the last case that ever was held on that one item. So every time they'd talk about Greenville, the Labor Board always remembered the Greenville case.

INTERVIEWER: This is just before Taft-Hartley, right? 1946, and the Taft-Hartley comes in in 1947.

LUCIA: When did the Taft-Hartley come in?

INTERVIEWER: 1947.

LUCIA: (laughs) Gee, you're better informed than I am! Well, maybe that's why. In 1947, the Taft-Hartley law banned.... No, first they were trying to ban union shops, but then they had a ruling that people could vote on it.

INTERVIEWER: Right. They <u>did</u> vote on it.

LUCIA: They had to vote on it whether they wanted a union shop or not. But that was abandoned later on because it worked all right. It was found that people didn't mind it. As a rule it's only during the campaign. So we signed the contract in May of 1949. The employer never got over the fact that he had to sign a union contract. He never forgave us. So he made life miserable for the people. But I remember the union observer--that's a cute story, I got to tell it. The union observer was Willie--I can't remember his last name. He was a nice guy. But it took him forever to say, "Yeess, Maaaa'aaaaam."

INTERVIEWER: He was the observer for the election?

LUCIA: He was the union observer for the election. Each side has--whatever it would amount to--usually about two observers. Each one voted in a block. That's what happens when the union people want to go together and they vote. Even though I warned Willie that this would happen. I said, "Now, you might get all yes votes all at once or all no votes all at once. Don't get alarmed." Well, anyway, I'm not there for the election but I can see when it's being counted. I watched poor Willie and I thought he'd die before the yes vote would come in. He turned ashen. He was just as white as could be. And then after the block of no's, the yes began to come in. And his ear lobes began to tingle--he got so red, he lit up like a bulb. They were very poor people. I never saw such abject poverty as I saw in the South there. Their houses were on stilts, four pieces or a block of wood or whatever it is that they put the house on. Wood, I suppose it would be, or cement maybe. It does get cold in spite of what people say. The South isn't always warm. In those days they used to have pot-bellied stoves in one room. If you'd sit near it in order to keep warm, you'd burn up; if you'd go away from it, you'd freeze. They didn't even have curtains on their windows, they didn't have any rugs; you could see the dirt through the cracks in the wood. They'd stuff the windows with paper to keep the drafts from coming in. They used to earn--this Willie and his wife, she worked there, too, and she's a wonderful person--they didn't even have spoons and forks to eat with. They used to eat.... They asked me, invited me for dinner, you know. Well, of course, I told them that I was on a diet and I couldn't eat the goo that they ate. The biscuits were delicious. The Southern biscuits are delicious. But they had sorghum and things like that. A lot of fat and grease and stuff. I thought, "Poor things, how can they really continue to exist?" She said she had worked in the fields, in the cotton fields for as little as ten cents a day. Then when they couldn't meet their obligations, whatever they had would always be repossessed or taken away from them so they'd have to start life all over again. I said, "Were your people that way?" I called it inherited poverty because from one generation to another they inherited it. Then the children.... How far they went in Greenville. It was fifty miles from the cradle of the Confederacy. I remember that sign, every time I had to go by it. Let's see, I deviate so much, that's my trouble. I get excited; it strikes home particular things that I remember. What was I going to say?

INTERVIEWER: Just talking about Greenville and the conditions of the people.

LUCIA: Oh, the children. They were so mean and so cruel that the teachers would punish the children of the parents who belonged to the union. They would hold them back. They would keep them after school. They would scorn the children. When it came to unemployment insurance, the employer put obstacles in their path. They were laid off so that they couldn't.... They'd have to wait a long time to be able to get.... I can't begin to tell you the method of discrimination they had in almost every town that I went to. I may have forgotten. It could apply to Corsicana, it could apply to all the small Southern towns.

INTERVIEWER: Now, these people in Greenville, they were white workers, right?

LUCIA: Oh, yes. No blacks allowed. No blacks at all. All white. And they were very poor. I remember that when we had a convention, I said, "Willie, you've got to come to New York." I didn't care if I had to pawn everything I had in the house if the union wouldn't let him. But they did, they were very nice. So we brought Willie to New York to the convention. He couldn't wait until he got back. And his wife told me that they used to sit around in the living room, or whatever they called it--it wasn't a living room, it was a bit of everything--and he'd tell these fabulous tales about New York. They even took him to the Bowery. They took him to nightclubs and places. Frank Cynewski did that because he knew him from his work there. And they were very nice to him. But what happened was that the company made up its mind that they're not going to make it easy for the people. So I was in Birmingham, Alabama, out of town, when I get a call from Willie and his wife that people are resigning. You see, we never got the closed shop, we wouldn't get the closed shop. "People are resigning from the union, they're turning in...." There's a certain way.... Cards that they sign in closed shop areas say they have an opportunity, thirty days notice to withdraw from the union. "They're beginning to resign. There's pressure from the company. Come and save us." I got in the car. I was about sixteen miles away from there. And on the highway, I saw a truck stopped. So I kind of slowed down. I wanted to.... As I slowed down, two men got out with guns and they said, "If you're going to Greenville, Alabama, we have to tell you we'll give you 24 hours to get out of town." I got in the car and continued right on to Greenville, Alabama. But what had happened in the meantime.... I was only gone a few days and the company had gotten the majority of the people to sign resignations. They all signed at the same time, you see. Willie hurriedly called a meeting of the people, some of the men there in his home. He said, "We got to get Miss Lucia out of town. Her life is in danger." They were after me. One time they tried to stop me on the highway, they almost side-swiped me off the highway. And then in the middle of the night, they escorted me out of town so that I wouldn't have any trouble. And that's the last we saw of the company, because it closed its doors because it over-expanded. You see, we couldn't carry on because they overexpanded during the war. It had nothing to do with the union. But we got blamed for it. So anybody that followed us in that town must have had a terrible time after that.

INTERVIEWER: So when was this that finally . . .

LUCIA: Well, finally it closed its doors and there was nothing. Then Amesbury--Amesbury was funny. Amesbury also went through a period of bankruptcy. And the union loaned it money to continue. Do you remember that?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. We were reading that they did things like that occasionally.

LUCIA: Because it had an obligation to its people. They felt terrible that it was going out of town and Amesbury was a small town and the hat shop closing would deprive numerous families, being bankrupt also. So, they asked the people if they could afford to give a little bit--a loan--to sign a paper for a loan. And I don't know how much the union collected from the people themselves but the great big bulk of the money came from the union. We lost about $75,000 to $100,000 after awhile. They couldn't keep it up, they didn't have any work. Because the foreign hats, the foreign imports with bodies they needed. They came from Taiwan or Hong Kong or wherever it is--France, even. And we couldn't get any relief on the tariff business. So they closed their door eventually at Amesbury.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have anything else to say about Greenville or do you want to talk about Corsicana?

LUCIA: Corsicana was.... Oh, do I have a history of that. I had to go back and forth, back and forth. It was very hard.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't we look and see what's in the file before you get started. I'll stop this.

LUCIA: Corsicana; that's the hardest of all because I was in and out so many times. (break in tape) I said, "That's nothing new. We've known that right along. There's nothing you can do about it." And to prove it, they gave me a copy of the material they had gathered on it. I said, "What do you mean you can't do anything about it? These girls are afraid to tell you anything but amongst them while the work is being done, you can find out for yourself. You don't have to take my word for it." They knew it. They had gathered the material and the employers and who was guilty of it, and how many girls and so forth and so on. I said, "I wasn't going to fool around with anything like that. If I'm not going to get any help on the question of sex." Maybe I would today. I could turn into Elizabeth Ray and go out there like Elizabeth Ray and collect money (laughs), back pay.

INTERVIEWER: That was in Erie, Pennsylvania?

LUCIA: Yeah. Corsicana; now, let's see how far back I can go. One of the nicest leaflets I got complimented on by a number of people was just between friends making an appeal to the union, picking on union people after we had organized and signed a contract. Now, 1959, 1958, May, 1958--this is ours, one is ours and the other is the company's. And I never got so tired of hearing "The Yellow Rose of Texas." They had it tuned down on the radio station. I think somebody must have told them it irritated me. Every time something came on it was "The Yellow Rose of Texas." 1958--now I know that I went there much before 1958. You know I can't find.... I know I had a separate folder for it and I can't find it. Went to Texas in 1958, but I had been there before.

INTERVIEWER: Well, why don't we start with what you remember about it?

INTERVIEWER: When you spoke, did you usually speak from notes or did you just do it extemporaneously?

LUCIA: No, I can't speak from notes. If you want to kill me, you just give me notes to go by and I'm lost. No, it was always extemporaneous. I said, "I know we're not accepted here very graciously. We've been looked upon as scabs and the rumor going around has it that we're communists. Well, the fact that I was investigated by the government...." Before they send anybody on a mission like that, they have the F.B.I.--if I had known what I know about the F.B.I. now! (laughs)--they had the F.B.I. investigating the individual to see if there's no Red taint or that they're the kind of person they want to send on a mission like that. I said, "So, as far as communism is concerned, you don't have to worry about that from our union." And then I thought that as long as I'm talking to them, I'll tell them about what we've done in other cities. So little by little I kept edging, telling what we're going to do in the city. As far as the Texas Miller was concerned, it was a freak the way that got started. Now, you referred to George Lambert, didn't you? Latane Lambert?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: Well, George Lambert was one of the men that was also beaten up by the thugs in Dallas at the time when they were beating up everybody.

INTERVIEWER: When Baer was beaten up.

LUCIA: When Baer was beaten up. Well, he was the organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Latane was a free-lancer. She was a very able person; she had worked for different unions. George is dead now, but Latane is still around. We had thought that we ought to start a campaign in Corsicana. We had sort of looked into it once just to get a feel, a spirit of the town. So, we hired Latane Lambert for Dallas work because we needed someone to substitute for Arbol [Lynch]. And she was told, "Keep away from Corsicana." Because we had promised him--he was with the runaway shop from New York--we had at least promised, I mean the union had promised him, "We won't bother you for a year. But as soon as the year's up, well, we'll come and try to organize your people."

INTERVIEWER: Why did the union promise not to bother him for a year?

LUCIA: Because he said, "I'm moving out," and he needed to build his shop up. He was decent enough to go to the union and say, "I'm moving out. I'm not moving because of the union, but I need a plant, I need space. I can't have it here in New York, it would cost too much. But there I can get it free of charge, you know, tax free," or whatever they give them as inducements to get them into their city. He says, "But you got to give me at least a year to break in my help before you make any attempt to organize. Because otherwise you're not going to be fair if you're going to exact payment right away quick when I have to train these people."

LUCIA: Looks like 1951: "Lions Hear AF of L Spokesman Tell About the Red Threats." That's when I came back from my Marshall Plan and I was speaking on the Marshall Plan and against communism, which was timely there, you know, in Corsicana. The owner of the hotel where we stayed--one day I went in there to have lunch at his restaurant--he said, "Miss Lucia, can you help me? I need a speaker so badly tomorrow. My speaker abandoned me." And I said, "Well, why not me?" He said, "You know, you're not very graciously accepted by the people." I said, "Well, I don't have to talk about the union. I just came back from France working for the government and I'm able to talk on the Marshall Plan and the effects it has on the life of our nation and stopping the trend toward communism if we can." "Oh," he said, "That would be fine. That would be just the subject they'd like to hear." When he introduced me--they didn't know I was coming--you should have seen their faces. "How in the hell did she get here? Who told her to come in?" You know, they could have murdered the guy. And when he announced that I was going to speak about my trip to France and on the Marshall Plan, their expression changed a little bit. But I had something to talk about and it was the unions that we were visiting when we were in France. He finally introduced me and I told them what the purpose was, that we're trying to stem the tide of communism in Europe. And that there's quite a bit of it being demonstrated in the trade union movement in France and that it would be good for us to learn about what troubles the French people and whether the Marshall Plan has been effective or not. And I said, "Of course, you know what made it possible for the communists to make inroads was, first of all, the war and, secondly, there was need and unemployment and starvation and they were ready to listen to anybody--a messiah--that comes along. It's not particularly that they were interested in communists as such, but they're the people that are usually there when something like that happens. Contrary to all beliefs, the first thing that was done during the Hitler regime was to kill the trade union movements. That was the beginning of the holocaust that brought us all into war." Well, then I fixed it that way and with what unions had done, I thought, "Well, I've talked enough about unions. Now, I'd better talk about the Marshall Plan." When the wealth or the.... Any group of people in an area.... I was thinking that there were a lot of oil people in that audience, you know, and of course, I didn't know that they were oil magnates. I used to say to the man at the desk, "When am I going to meet these oil millionaires?" He said, "Miss Lucia, you talk to them every day." I said, "Those people? They look like they're ditch diggers!" He said, "Yeah, you should have the ditches that they dig." Of course, you know that Corsicana had erupted with oil fairly recently at the time, all things considering, in Kilgore, Texas. And even on their main street you see the derricks going up and down, you know. It's fascinating to watch them because at Christmas time they decorate them all the way up. They light the horizon in more ways than one. So I was very graciously received. I must say that I got quite an applause after I got through. The newspaper even gave me credit for winning those people over because it was an unusual talk from their point of view and accepted so readily.

LUCIA: Well, Latane didn't--either she didn't remember or didn't care, but she happened to know a postman that delivered in Corsicana. I don't know how she got acquainted with him. She asked what he was doing and he said, "I'm a mail carrier in Corsicana." "Oh, do you know anybody that works in the hat shop?" He says, "Yeah, I think I could get you some names." So he got her about eleven or twelve names. That's before she even notified us. I was on my way down. I was going to go down for something else. When I got there she said, "Carmen, we're due in Corsicana today." I said, "Oh, no you're not. You've been told not to bother them." "But I already did. I sent the letter and the meeting is called for today." It was about fifty miles from Dallas. Well, by the time we got there--of course, we had to go because the letters had already been sent. I said, "You're going to get hell because we were told to leave them alone." By the time we got there, I don't know how the people found.... Oh, she said in the letter, "If you want to see me before the meeting we'll be at the Barra Hotel." So they assumed that that's where we'd be staying. Well, it was the only hotel in town, anyway. When we got there, there were eleven people waiting for us. They had been fired because they had put up a notice on the bulletin board and were encouraging everybody around the clock to go to the meeting, not knowing that they were going to be fired. The reason for that is they weren't afraid because the steel workers had a big plant there. They had been organized for years. And they had their husbands and so forth. So they weren't afraid, you know, they didn't have that fear. So we thought, "What do you mean, you people were fired?" I was carrying a typewriter--I don't think it was a mimeograph machine, it was a typewriter. I took the affidavits right away quick and I said, "I'm going to go and see the head employer." So I went to see Ben Parrill--that's his name. I used to call him "The Red Peril" because his hair was red. And I told him, "What are you doing? You're violating the law. These people didn't even...." I said, "We didn't even know that they were coming." He said, "You people double-crossed me. Your boss promised me that I wouldn't be bothered for a year and it's only been nine months. I think that you've broken your promise and I can do as I darn please." Oh, he was furious. He wouldn't take them back. So we had to file charges. Not only that, in the meantime, all the company.... The foremen were going all around that night to see who was coming to the meeting. When the people were about to go into the hotel, they'd see the company car and they'd go right home. So we had a very bad meeting. Just the eleven--or maybe we had a couple of more. They might have been stooges, for all we know. So that started the campaign. We had to keep somebody there. We had to go to the Labor Board. We got Matt Wilson and Charlie Morris--do you know Matt Wilson? He's the attorney that we had in Dallas for that case for George Baer. He was on the Labor Board at the time and a wonderful person. The son of a preacher--not a son of a gun or something else--but the son of a preacher. He represented organized labor . . . (break in tape) In the meantime, we kept on organizing and getting results in spite of it. And in the meantime, too, the steel workers closed their doors, which had nothing to do with our situation.

LUCIA: There had been talk about going out of business for a long time. They were concentrating their efforts in one area, I don't know, or something to that effect. I'm not sure what the reason was, but I think it was concentration or centralization. Well, that didn't do us any good. They blamed the union for it. So, we tried to have a strike but most of all, first, we tried the Board. We lost the election but then we started to see if we could work up a strike feeling. We had the majority, as far as that.... But they had given Mr. Parrill a ring for Christmas and the day before the election he makes a speech, he cries and takes his ring off, and he says, "You want me to take this ring off? I'll never be able to wear it if you vote for the union." And they had signs up. There was an underpass going to the factory.... At five o'clock in the morning I went to see.... Who was with me? I'll think about it afterwards; somebody was with me, it was a local person. We found the balloons. They had balloons: "Vote No." "A Yes Vote Means a Strike Vote." Everything. And they had like Burma-Shave signs all along the road. Of course, they had some on the sidewalk and I called the police department and had them removed. What they didn't remove I kicked off anyway. The balloons we deflated with pins and needles. But anyway, we lost the election. So I left somebody in charge there. I think the local board was in charge. I said, "If anything should happen, if there's any attempt at any time, a feeling for the union...." Oh, in the meantime, the employer had also called the men in, the men were to keep people in that particular situation. No, he didn't call them in. They went in and they apologized for their having brought this about and so forth. So when I got a call about a year later--I have no idea about the time--that they wanted to organize, I said, "Alright, call the meeting." I said, "Listen boys, you double-crossed yourselves once, don't double-cross yourselves a second time." They swore on a stack of Bibles--I had the Gideon Bible in my hotel room--they swore on a stack of Bibles that it wouldn't happen. "We were fooled once. We won't be fooled a second time." You know, they did the same thing! He makes another speech, he gives them a party the night before, he gets them drunk, he promises them a bonus and all this. Of course, it's good material for the Labor Board, but who wants the Labor Board except as a last resort? And we lost the election. When I got back to the hotel I was so.... Oh, he was taking pictures, Parrill was taking pictures, and you can imagine what I looked like in his movie coming out when the vote was lost and I saw that he was being patted on the back and they had given him flowers, a great, big wreath of flowers, "Congratulations to Ben," you know. And I thought, "Oh, those so-and-so's, how could they do that?" I didn't cry, although I felt like crying. I put my head up and walked stiffly by, you know. "Good-bye, Miss Lucia. I hope you feel better!" Ben Parrill said. So I go to the hotel and the woman at the desk says to me, "Miss Lucia, some girls were here and they left you a package." It was a beautiful package with ribbons and everything. And I thought, "Well, give me the package." I was so anxious to see what it was. I needed consolation. I opened it and I didn't even know what it was. I can see the man's face who was helping me. He was from the Stetson

LUCIA: Hat Company from Philadelphia and I can't think of his name--Arty, Arty somebody. He said, "Don't you know what it is?" I said, "No." I didn't know what it was. He says, "Cow dung." Great big cow dung, dried cow dung, "In appreciation for your efforts." No names or anything. So then I really went upstairs in a hurry and I started to cry my eyes out. I tried to find out who the five were. By the description, I think I was able to figure it out, but I thought, "Someday, I'm going to go after those five people and I'm going to get them in the union." That's my revenge, to make union people out of them. Well, again, we had Labor Board cases. Again, they were told that they had made mistakes and that they had violated the law and everything. Finally, in 1958 I think is when we got them. Alex called back. I said to Alex, "I don't want to go back there again. I can't. For the third time I'd die if I lost." He says, "No. You're going back because they know you and they have more confidence in you. Who am I going to send that would know the people?" So I went back and we won. But, it took the campaign, the Texas Miller, Adams Hat, the union label business to really get him to sign the contract. We had him down on his knees. By the time we got through with going to all his customers, every store that he had all over the country, wherever there was an Adams Hat store, the union sent people in from the respective locals. He couldn't get any orders. People were afraid to put orders in for fear that they'd put the orders but couldn't get the hats, because imminently there would be a strike. So he recognized the union and signed the contract. Okay, then the union expires (laughs) I mean, the contract expired and we had to renew it. We had one hell of a battle. Again, the use of the union label came up. By that time I had been gone. Carl Otto was in charge of the Texas situation. He was in charge of Corsicana. In fact, he was in charge of that whole area. No, he wasn't because--not completely--because we were still in Texas in 1957, 1958 and 1959. No, this was 1958. No, I was still in Texas, but not in charge of that particular area. I was in Garland and in Longview most of the time and so was John Kulish. And they had to go through another election. They were certain that we were going to win the election. But we didn't. You know what saved us? The fact that they had union labels. You can't.... I made a badge out of theirs. They said, "Buy Texas Adams Hats," "Buy Texas Union Made," or something like that. I switched it around on one of the tags. And the Labor Board said they had no right to intimidate us. Anyway, he got tired of it after a while and finally signed. And I think that it was in 1959 that the contract was finally signed. Yeah, 1960, "Wage Talks to Begin in Corsicana." It's in 1960, so I imagine shortly after that the contract was signed.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's finish 1960. When did you finally leave the South?

LUCIA: Let's see, my daughter was married in 1952, I went to France in 1952, she was married in 1951. He got into the service. He went a year to Harvard--that would make it 1952--then he was drafted. He had enlisted because he knew he was going to be drafted. He went to Korea, of all places. He was gone for two

LUCIA: years, I think, eighteen months or two years. That would make it what? 1962 already? No. She got married in 1951. In about 1959 or 1960 he came back from Korea and he got a job in Richmond, Virginia. That would make it what?

INTERVIEWER: 1960, 1961.

LUCIA: Then when he.... They went to California. When he was in the service, he went to San Antonio--he was in the Air Force--and then he went to Sacramento--they have another air field there--and then he came back and he decided that he was going.... So it couldn't have been 1960. Then he decided that he was going to try to get his degree, his Ph.D., at Emory. It took him about three and a half years. He shortened it by going extra classes or something. So that would make it about 1955 or 1958, 1955 or 1957. Then they moved to.... He got a job with Union Carbide and he went to Forest Hills and Monroe, New York. They were transferred to Monroe, New York. That's when I moved with them.

INTERVIEWER: So you went with them. Well, you said you were in Corsicana in 1960?

LUCIA: Yeah, I was in Corsicana in.... Well, Holyoke up to 1957. We had a long strike.

INTERVIEWER: In Massachussetts?

LUCIA: In Massachussetts. Then I went back to Atlanta. No, I was still there in Atlanta in 1957, so I didn't move. My daughter did. In 1957 I was sent to Texas. We started the campaign in.... Jack Kulish went first. He was sent to.... The president was mad at me. The day that I was to leave Holyoke, he called me up--I hadn't been home in seven months, hadn't been to Atlanta in seven months--and he said, "I want you to take the plane this afternoon and go to Milwaukee." I said, "I'm not going to go to Milwaukee." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm not going! I haven't been home in seven months. The boys go home every weekend. They all lived around there; Boston and so forth. I've been stuck here for seven months with this strike, working seven days a week. I'm not going!" "Well, I've decided that you're going." "You may have decided but you can't make me go." He says, "Well, what are you vice-president for?" I said, "It doesn't mean a <u>damn</u> thing to me. You don't pay a vice-president's wages. And if it's the vice-president that has to do the work, get your New York vice-presidents to get off their fannies and get them to do some work!" I said it just as rough as that. I was <u>so</u> mad. And I hung up on him. The boys went and backed for me--Frank Cynewski and Ed Erwin, who was in charge of the strike there. They said, "She worked, the girl has worked so hard, she's been here seven months. She's going to be the mistress of ceremonies at our banquet tonight. Can't you at least let her stay?" He said, "You people are aiding and abetting her." They got hell for it. It didn't last very long. So I went home. I went to Atlanta. And instead of enjoying my leisure for three.... Let's see, it was

LUCIA: July when I went home. And I didn't hear from them until September, I think. I was worried; I was getting paid, I don't know why I was worried, but I wasn't enjoying it. And he finally called me to say I was wanted in Winchester, Tennessee. They were going to enlarge a shop or move or something--dedication of the new building. I shouldn't stay there more than a day and then go on to Texas because John Kulish was there and they found the atmosphere very worthwhile at Resistol. They made a speech. And I said, "They made a speech and they left??" I said, "I'll bet the boss has made one already!" And sure enough, he had. Sure, as soon as Byer Rolnick, Mr. Rolnick heard they were there, he made a speech. By the time we got there again, the people were gone. We had to start all over again.
No, that's not Corsicana, is it? How did I get off?

INTERVIEWER: No, what I was asking.... I was trying to finish out the story from when you were in Corsicana and when you were finally retired from the union, what year and . . .

LUCIA: Well, it was a little after the same difficulties with Resistol, because while we won the election, we couldn't get a contract. We went to Garland and we organized them and we were waiting for a decision from the Labor Board. And when the decision finally.... The company had appealed it several times and when it went through the courts two or three times, they finally decided that they had had enough. They were going to sign with the union. So that's how we got them. And the campaign was on them, too, but it wasn't as effective because their hat brand wasn't as well known as the Adams Hat brand. But he was annoyed; he didn't want all this trouble. He had had enough of it in 1939 without going through with it again in 1957 and 1958.

INTERVIEWER: So when did you finally retire?

LUCIA: Then M&B came. I had the M&B strike. Did we cover that?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: Yeah, the M&B strike? Yes, we did. We never really finished because we kept trying to organize the rest of the market. There were quite a number of cap shops there. But the M&B.... I had gone back to help. By this time, there had been a change in our office here in the international. They had to cut their staff and they didn't have the money and they were trying to.... You know, they didn't want to lose me. So I can see the idea. "No," I said, "I'm going to retire,"--that was the idea, I was going to retire in 1965. In fact, it was a little bit after 1965 and Al Smoke respected my work and appreciated me a lot. He was very nice. He was the secretary-treasurer. He said, "We can't afford to lose you entirely. Couldn't you work part-time?" I said, "No. I don't want to mess up my Social Security." He said, "Well, we'll pay you what the Social Security allows and then you can continue. We'll call on you and we'll make sure that it isn't too open." It became practically a steady job. I was getting

LUCIA: $1680.00 a year, I think, or something like that. So I finally had to give it up. I just felt that it was very unfair. So I told them I was through. In 1974 I finally told them I was resigning. And they wanted me to stay on the general board.

INTERVIEWER: Phew! That was a long time!

LUCIA: Oh! It was long, awfully long. I can't believe all these years. What did he say you should do? Now, you're welcome to take all this stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I can take it all. Is there anything that you want copied and returned like that?

LUCIA: No, I think I took a few things from here, I couldn't be bothered. I don't think I've read this, though. Do you think you have it?

INTERVIEWER: No, but we'd like it.

LUCIA: I would like it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, if we could have it, I'd copy it and return it.

LUCIA: That's about the only thing I'd want.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LUCIA: The rest of it, I don't care. Of course, you've got to feel this way. I put extras in. I'll tell you why. I didn't have time to look through each folder to see if they were in the folders. So what I did is I made them . . .

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well, I'll tell you, the next thing it'll be processed and one of the things you do is you separate out the extras. Usually we just throw away the duplicates, but no problem, I'll just tell them to send it all back.

LUCIA: Oh, that would be fine.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, we'll take care of all of that.

LUCIA: Because you'll put it all according to chronological order or according to whatever way you do it. I don't know how you do it.

INTERVIEWER: Well, we'll probably keep it the way you've got it but we'll clean it up a little bit more.

LUCIA: Yeah, I hope you do! (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: And if you've got a pen, I want to fill this out. (break in tape) You were saying you always made everything dramatic, especially the women.

LUCIA: Especially. I wanted to dramatize anything and make it like a theater, a presentation of facts, though. Make the girl.... We would always choose the prettiest girls, the most slender girls, because, you know, it was just like an advertisement. So I'd always dress them in white, I'd hurriedly make dresses and have them in white with red sashes. They always looked so striking. Now, when I was at city hall--I don't know whether it's where the Liberty Bell is, but somewhere in Philadelphia. There's a crooked, crooked stairway that goes all the way up. You can see it. And it's all open, a spiral staircase that goes all the way up. We were going for some reason. We had had a strike and had all been arrested. We had been in that jail that I told you about. All the toilets flushing at one time and the girls screaming and everything else. And as I watched at the bottom while the girls went up, I thought, "What a beautiful picture that was to see those young girls imbued with the spirit of doing something, really catching the spirit of democracy in action, you know." And we had moments like that on picket lines that I treasure so much. Or one scene that is very sad when I was arrested with a very sweet old woman on the picket line in the Los Angeles strike. They were very mean when we were arraigned before the harsh matron there. She insisted that we get rid of all our rings and whatever jewelry we had. They treated us like prostitutes. Here was a sweet little old lady who had never done a thing in her life, white hair, a beautiful face, and very kind and soft-spoken. And she didn't rest until she removed that ring--that woman's wedding ring--from her hand. The woman cried. I was so mad, I cried, because how could anybody be so dirty. What harm is that ring going to be on her finger? "You can't remove it, nobody's going to be able to steal it from her. Besides, we're only going to be here a short time." Well, they gave us the works and we were given a mattress and brought into this huge, huge room like a great big huge dormitory and they had three-tier berths, you know. "Choose your bed! Make your bed and lie in it." Well, all the choice ones were taken, you know. And I thought, "Where am I going to put this poor thing?" When she saw what was happening to her she thought she'd die of shame and humiliation. So I kept saying, "Don't do this to her. Let her stay here. I'll assume the responsibility, let her wait in this office and when the union comes to pay to take us out, why, she can go right away quick." "No, she has to go along with you." Well, the story was that we stayed there a long time--about four or five hours. Well, I made her comfortable, I covered her up. I says, "Go to sleep." And they gave her an aspirin tablet. I thought, "Well, I'm going to find something out about this joint while I'm here." So I went around asking--it was during the Depression--these beautiful girls, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year old girls. "What are you in for?" "What do you think?" I says, "Well, I was just asking." "Well, can't get a job and we do the best we can." And the girls would come to Los Angeles in the hope that a talent scout would see them. They couldn't get jobs. There were no jobs to be had. Then I got to the hard-core prostitutes and they said, "Listen, I don't want to . . ."

CARMEN LUCIA
SUPPLEMENTARY INTERVIEW

by Bette Craig

June 9, 1978

INTERVIEWER: The date is June 9, 1978. In the other interview transcript that I just read, I saw a lot about your early work in Rochester, neckwear workers. You talked a little bit about your family but I'd like to find out a little bit more about what it was like growing up in Rochester in a family of fourteen children.

LUCIA: Well, we were fortunate enough not to have landed in New York City with fourteen children. And coming from Italy where--like the Southern people like the out-of-doors--in Italy, people like the out-of-doors, too. So, after we got out of the first place that we lived in, which was flush with the railroad tracks that I told you about, and on that street--it was called Arch Street; is no longer there; it was more or less the city dump where the trains would stop and change and make a raucous noise and everything else--well, to us that was a fairy land. I always remember the trains going by and stopping and waving at the motormen and at the people in the train wishing I could be there and wondering where they were going. I was very young--about two years old. But what I loved most about the train was the end of the train. There was always, I don't know what they called it, but we used to call it "alogia" in Italian. And it was always shining. It was gold to me, it was brilliant gold; but it was brass. And always a black man polishing it, and so it was a mirage. And I thought, someday I'm going to be in one of these trains and I'm going to go and sit there and see how it feels. I had a feeling of always wanting to go and hearing that eerie sound at night which drew me to all kinds of places. I think that had a terrific influence on my wanderings.

INTERVIEWER: You hear the sound . . .

LUCIA: Now, the place where we lived was very humble, of course, and the fourteen of us . . .

INTERVIEWER: How many rooms did you have?

LUCIA: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: How many rooms did you have in your house?

LUCIA: I don't even remember what rooms.... Well, when we moved to Marietta Street, which was our next abode . . . was where we were not welcome by the population of English and Scotch and so forth. We were the first Italian family. We have a very, very

LUCIA: large home, but we rented most of it in order to keep it up. So sometimes there were three or four of us in one room. When we were sick there might be two or three in one spot. And, oh we were scattered all over on the ground floor with about four or five rooms with fourteen people.

INTERVIEWER: You must have had.... What were mealtimes like? Did all of you eat together?

LUCIA: Well, we had two kitchens. It was very interesting. The younger ones ate in the kitchen, and the older ones ate in the dining room. None of us wanted to graduate, the smaller ones. I was the seventh child, so I was considered a little smaller. None of us wanted to graduate into the dining room because it wasn't fun; my father was very strict. We weren't supposed to talk. We'd be dealing with death while we were chewing our food if we talked. So we liked the kitchen so we could raise the roof, make a little noise. But as we grew up and the older children got married or left for some reason or other, our family shrunk, and we began to have more room. The big two rooms that we let out downstairs we began to call our own. So now we had three dining rooms, the kitchen, the other one, and then the state dining room, as we called it.

INTERVIEWER: For formal occasions?

LUCIA: Yes, for formal occasions. And we loved it because we had our own home. And we didn't know until about twenty years later that that home was never paid for, that dad always paid the interest. It must have been bought over a hundred times, you know, by interest paying, paying just for the interest. But we loved it because we had a home of our own. As the crisis grew, the Italian people began to come in, but they were sort of people who each loved their own home.

INTERVIEWER: And that pretty back yard, I just saw that picture.

LUCIA: Nice, and that beautiful back yard with the inevitable grape arbor, you know. They had to have a grape arbor. And I remember that when we got the first Gramophone was the Alian Vocalian, or something was the name of the Gramophone. And we were the first ones on the street. And my sister and I did the cleaning on Saturday because my father was very meticulous. We used to open all the windows so that all the neighbors could hear that we had this famous phonograph. We weren't show-offs, but we were proud of what we had.

My father and mother were both literate. My mother had been brought up in a convent in Italy, so she was a literate Italian--read well in Italian, and spoke well. She hardly ever learned English. But that was our fault because we were very critical. Every time she'd try to say something, we'd laugh at the way

LUCIA: she pronounced it. So she got very discouraged. Of course, we didn't mean to be unkind; children are that way. Well, to make a long story short, one thing I learned was that unless people worked together and band together and share everything together, they can never be happy and they can never overcome poverty. And one of the ways we overcame the difficulties we had--the economic difficulties--was the fact that we all pooled our resources, turned in our money to my father every weekend when we got the pay . . .

INTERVIEWER: How many of you were there working?

LUCIA: Well, you know it kept shrinking from time to time. One left and went to California and he was a wanderer, and one got married. One sister, two sisters flew the coop as fast as they could. They wanted to get married as fast as they could. They wanted to get married and get out--you know, lead their own lives. I had five members of the family that never married, and that was due to the fact that my father was very rigid with his discipline with the girls. You know, Italian girls had to be like nuns. We never, never talked to anybody--at least to the family--about sex. Sex--that word wasn't even mentioned in the family. So we just grew up in spite of anything. I became very active through the YWCA, actually. They had an Industrial Department and they had a woman, Elizabeth Hiss, who was very, very liberal for her period of time. And she imbued us. We belonged to the union but we didn't know why. You know, it was sort of a casual thing, although I loved it. I loved the first strike I had and I loved the picket lines and the excitement of coming and going and everything.

INTERVIEWER: And you were working at Steinbloch.

LUCIA: No, I wasn't working at Steinbloch to begin with, but at the age of fourteen, I went to work. They put me on a sewing machine and put my foot on the pedal. I had never had an electric machine in my life. And there were two needles, one going this way and one this way, both of them stuck in my finger. To this day I'll never forget the horror of it, and the pain. But I became interested because I also had a brother who was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW. He used to anger me because people made fun of him because he'd say, "I won't work." He was an idealist if ever there was one. Every cause that came up, whether it was Sacco and Vanzetti or whatever it was, he was very active.

INTERVIEWER: Was he an older brother?

LUCIA: Yes, he was an older brother.

INTERVIEWER: How much older?

LUCIA: He was the oldest brother of all.

INTERVIEWER: So he was probably at least eight or nine years older.

LUCIA: Oh, he must have been. I was the seventh child and there were six before me and they're two years apart; about fourteen years older. And I loved him dearly. I loved him for his sincerity and I loved him for his courage, because it took a lot of courage to stand up for causes. So I became interested in the Amalgamated and became active, and [became] chairlady in the shop in Steinbloch. I had been working with Steinbloch. I was considered a rebel then because I.... They said I had a negative point of view. I really didn't. I used to ask a lot of questions. I wasn't satisfied with the answers I'd get, and I'd be very aggressive and insist I want to understand more about it. In fact, that was one of the reasons why I left the Catholic school: because the Sister treated me shamefully because every time I asked about the Bible or I asked about God.... Well, I angered her the very first day I went to school there. It was a Catholic school for poor Italian children on the grounds of the Academy, Sacred Heart Academy. You could imagine the difference between the children in the Academy and the poor children in this . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was it free or did you have to pay?

LUCIA: No, it was free. That's why we went, because we owned this home in Rochester. There were no free textbooks in those days, you see. Anyone that owned property had to pay for their textbooks. This nice English family on Marietta Street said, "Well, we'll bring you and introduce you to the Mother Superior." So she brought the Lucia family in and the Mother Superior fell in love with the Italian way of life and she decided that that ramshackle gymnastics--used to be a gymnasium for the Academy girls--should be turned in for poor Italian children. So they asked us to scour the neighborhood and bring all the children in. We sure did.

INTERVIEWER: So you were in on the ground floor.

LUCIA: On the ground floor. Yes, you're right. But the first day I attended I had a Sister there who later became head of this, our school. She said, "Who made you?" Who made me? I had never had catechism. I was the one child at home that every time mother had a child, I would have to stay home until she got over her labor pains. And every Wednesday I'd have to stay home and turn the wringer for the washer woman. I was the one child that they always, I always had to stay home because I had a sister two years older than I was who was very brilliant and very pretty and a very lovely person. She is to this day. She should have been a mother herself. And to this day we think of her as being almost our mother because she mothered all of us when we were sick. She [the nun] was crazy about my sister but couldn't stand

LUCIA: me because Matty would ask no questions. She accepted blindly. And that was the one question that embarrassed the Catholics: how did the other children come around? Well, all kinds of questions like that. So she [the teacher] took a personal dislike and made my life miserable, just miserable. I was always in the back seat of the school, looking out at these beautiful Alexandria gardens, expensive gardens where the rich people lived, and I just daydreamed, and listening to not one word she was saying. But I was a good speller because I read well. I used to go to the library and borrow books and read. And we had a spelling bee one day and she gave me the hardest words. I finally got to the head of my class, and there was another boy at the head of his class. But she was determined I wasn't going to win, and I was determined I was going to win. She used to give me the hardest words to spell. Finally, she couldn't seem to drop me nohow or discourage me. She finally said to me, "Carmen Lucia, stop making eyes at Sam." Sure I was making eyes at Sam, but not amorously. I was hoping with all my breath, "I hope he drops dead. I hope he misses. I hope he misses!" You know, that's all I could think of. And well, she shamed me and that embarrassed me, and at lunch time I took my tribe of brother and sisters--all younger than me--I took them home in the middle of the day.

INTERVIEWER: That was your first walk-out.

LUCIA: Yes, my first [laughter] strike! And I was the first dropout. And no amount of perspiration on the part of my father would make me go back. I was going on twelve, twelve years old.

INTERVIEWER: Had you been in school for six years or a shorter time?

LUCIA: Well, actually, if you count six year, if you don't leave out all the Wednesdays I was out and every time mother had a baby, and every time somebody was sick and say, "Go help mother," I didn't have too much school. Really, I didn't. And I'm not blaming my parents. They're not mean, you know. They didn't mean at all to be unkind. It was natural that they'd give more interest to someone who showed some enthusiasm for education, and that was my sister, Matty. And she was brilliant and very pretty, too. Well anyway . . .

INTERVIEWER: How much schooling did she get?

LUCIA: She finished grammar school. Because she had a keen mind and at night she went to learn. Bookkeeping is what she went out to learn. Well anyway . . .

INTERVIEWER: What did she do later on in her life?

LUCIA: She worked for the county, Monroe County Welfare--took care of welfare cases. And a very brilliant person, a very lovely person, and very humane. Well anyway, Dad said, "If you're not going back

LUCIA: to Sacred Heart School, you're not going to school at all." I said, "Suits me. I don't care." So I stayed home for two years and until I was fourteen. I couldn't go to work until I was fourteen.

And on my birthday, April 3, 1906, I went to work. And they paid me two dollars a week. I didn't like the fact that there was such a differential between men and women. That was the first thing I noticed, although that was one of the first shops the Amalgamated had organized. I realized, of course, that the union can't work miracles overnight, you know. It takes time to settle it. But I said, "Why can't we work piecework? I'm faster than anybody in this department. I want to earn as much money as I can."

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't piecework to start with?

LUCIA: It wasn't then, not in this particular shop it wasn't. I went on piecework, and the first week I went on piecework I made about eighteen or twenty dollars, which was such a differential, and I was delighted to bring it home to my parents.

INTERVIEWER: How was the money handled that you brought home? Did you just give your entire paycheck over to them?

LUCIA: We gave our entire pay, and he gave us money for car fare, little incidentals--he wasn't stingy. Every time we needed something, all we needed to say was, "I need something." But you know, I had hand-me-downs all my life, and I got my first dress that was my very own that my mother made for about three dollars. It was dimity. White and black plaid dimity tied with a sash in the back, when I was about sixteen years old.

Well anyway, it was a happy household in a way. The boys were active; mother was very quiet. She's one of those self-effacing preachers that never spoke up, never even went to the store. Dad did all the buying, but she did all the cooking and the taking care of the children. And I always remember mother stirring a pot with one hand and nursing the baby with the other. That's a picture I have of her, from the time I got up in the morning. Then along comes my activity in the YWCA, and this woman Elizabeth Hiss. She knew I had a block somewhere I had to get out of.... Unfortunately, I had acne to make things worse. I wasn't a pretty child; I was never pretty. I was never good looking. And I had always kind of competition in the family. They were all good looking except me, so I had acne to make it worse, to make me more self-conscious. I began to feel that I was stupid. I didn't know anything, you know. But she [Hiss] worked miracles. She made me believe in me. She finally believed in me so much that I became very active in the YW Industrial Department. We used to have contests between the university girls, symposiums on "Is Philanthropy Justifiable," or something as big as that, which I enjoyed immensely. Then when I worked in the, got active

LUCIA: in the union, in the Amalgamated, I was chairlady of the shop where I worked--about two hundred people. And I took care of the complaints. And one day there was a controversy where there was a terrible internecine fight in the union. It had nothing to do with me or anybody else, but greed for power, power, possession of the union. See, we had all kinds of locals. We had women's local--talk about segregation. There were no Negroes. You remember, there never were any Negroes in the plants in those days, nowhere.

INTERVIEWER: There were Negroes living in Rochester, though?

LUCIA: No. What?

INTERVIEWER: Were there Negroes living in Rochester?

LUCIA: There were--well, there was one living on our street. That's the only Negro I ever saw, and way at the end. She used to do everybody's laundry. Very nice, I became very friendly with the little girl. I played with her. There were seven locals in the Rochester trying for power--the Italian local, the Slavanian, the Polish local. How could you weld all of this into a melting pot where there would be no differences of opinion on policy? And don't forget that we were nearing the era of Communism. You know, there had been the Revolution of 1917 in Russia, that at that time labor was thought to be the best thing that could happen to get rid of the Czar and Czarism, and all the exploitation of the people there. And I remember Sidney Hillman going to Russia at the time, coming back rather elated. That was before all the dirty work on the part of the Communists started. And anytime somebody disagreed in the locals, there was retaliation on the part of the people who ran the union. They would either lose their job, go to work the next morning, or they were held back and punished and penalized in some form or fashion. Well, time came to vote: it was voting time for the new officers. And I attended the meeting at the women's local.

INTERVIEWER: You were a member of that local?

LUCIA: I was a member of the women's local. I wasn't yet the secretary to Abraham Chatman.

INTERVIEWER: Does that mean that all of the women were in the women's local?

LUCIA: Yes, regardless of what department they worked in.

INTERVIEWER: Regardless of whether they were Italian-speaking or Polish-speaking?

LUCIA: No, they were all in one local.

INTERVIEWER: So in a way, the women's local was sort of more of an amalgam than any of the others.

LUCIA: Yes, but they were backwards--you know, they were scared. Men ran those. There was no such thing as women's activities in those days, you know. And the men would haunt them and would persecute them. So I attended this meeting and the quarrel was where are we going to hold the election? How are we going to hold it so that there will be no stuffing of ballots and boxes? Someone kept saying, "Let's have it in each plant." I didn't like the idea of having the union vote balloting because they'd be control on the people that work in that particular shop. And there were so many huge plants. There were about twenty thousand tailors in one particular plant. So I spoke up and I said, "Why have it in different plants? We've got a big, big office here with all kinds of . . . a huge hall. You could have a committee to watch the ballots, one from each local if you don't trust each other, and we could control it that way much better." Well, they finally took my, not my advice, because other people happened to feel the same way I did about it. I just happened to bring it up.

Chatman got in then as manager of the [ACWA] joint board, and he's still manager of the joint board today. It was 1925 when he got in. He was just as green as I was about anything in the union office. But he said who was that girl he heard that spoke at the women's local about having the election here in the.... And they told him she's the chairlady in Steinbloch's. And he said, "Well, I'd like to meet her," because his own secretary was leaving at the time, and they were having an awful lot of Italians come in, see, and they couldn't speak English. Not that my Italian was so perfect, but it would do. So he asked me to come and see him. And he liked me, and he said, "I'd like to put you on as my secretary. I need a secretary." I said, "I don't even know what it's all about. I don't know how to write letters, I don't know how to type. I wouldn't know how to take dictation." He said, "Never mind. We'll send you to school for a couple of weeks, and then you'll learn." They sent me for a couple of weeks half-days to learn typing. After that I went at night to learn shorthand at my expense.

INTERVIEWER: And you did learn all those things?

LUCIA: Yes. But there's one incident that's stuck in my memory. I had heard about the head of the union was coming. I just mentioned his name.

INTERVIEWER: Sidney Hillman.

LUCIA: Sidney Hillman. With such adoration, such admiration; and I was very proud. I was scared. Here I am the newcomer, and he's coming to meet the new manager and then he finds a greenhorn in the office who doesn't know what it's all about. He came and he said to Chatman,"Call your secretary. I want to give her a letter." Well, he called me and I was petrified. I didn't know shorthand. I couldn't.... I said, "I'm sorry. I don't know

LUCIA: shorthand." He said, "Who ever heard,"--and I've never forgiven him for that--"whoever heard of a secretary not knowing shorthand?" And Chatman says, "Well, we just got her out of the plant. She used to work at Steinblochs, but she'll do."

So you know, I wrote that letter, and every word he gave me to write--that Sidney Hillman gave me to write--was etched in my mind as though it had been done with acid. Every single word. And when I took it back and typed it he said, "Impossible. You took it in shorthand." I said, "No sir, I don't know shorthand. But you scared the hell out of me!" And I decided I would remember every word. Well anyway, that was so much.... I began to notice that policies toward the people in the trade union movement after it gets to a certain stage and they begin to feel important and big.that there's a variance in the idealism that we hold so dear which makes it possible for us to organize unions. Because if you don't have that love and that idealism and that belief, one could never go through with some of the agonies we go through to bring about the birth of a local. Many people would speak at the local meeting against the policies of the union, some justifiable and some not justifiable. They'd come to the [office] window the next morning and say to me, "I want to talk to your boss." And I'd say, "He isn't here. What's the matter--you tell me." And "I went to Steinbloch, I went to Goodman and Suss," or "I went to Friedman," or where it is that they went, "and they wouldn't let me go back to work." And I said, "Why?" And they said, "They got a call from the union and they were told not to rehire me."

INTERVIEWER: Was that Chatman personally that was involved?

LUCIA: Yes. I hate to say that, but it was a policy. I don't know whether it was his policy or whether it was something else.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it couldn't have happened if he didn't agree to it anyway.

LUCIA: Anyway, the man has changed over the years. I understand that he has changed. But that particular time I was so angry to think that the democracy that I had hoped would increase and not decrease had....

INTERVIEWER: And this was after you had been working for him for how long?

LUCIA: I worked for him for five years. And I used to go in and argue with him. "I don't think, Mr. Chatman, that you're being right to so and so. The man happens . . . I happen to know the man and I know that he's not a Communist. I know he has no desire to hurt the union. He has certain ideas he wants to carry out, and some of them are good ideas," I said. "When they're wrong, I never come back to you, but when they're right, I'm going to fight like hell for them." Well, and I'd carry it to the women's local, start something there. I'd always be fighting with somebody!

LUCIA: So when the opportunity came for me to go to Bryn Mawr Summer School, I went as a student for eight weeks in 1927. That was the year the Sacco and Vanzetti case--if you remember, we were very active in Bryn Mawr. We went to Philadelphia and we went to the Amalgamated, and the police were there, and they wouldn't let us go in to rally. And some of them got.... Mark Temple, I mean Mark Starr, who used to be in the . . .

INTERVIEWER: Used to work for the ILG.

LUCIA: He was an educator. He taught there. He was arrested and the next day the Philadelphia papers kept a great big banner, "Bryn Mawr, A Hotbed of Socialism! " So we broke the feeling. I had nothing to do with it all. Do you know Jane Smith?

INTERVIEWER: No.

LUCIA: Hilda Weddington Smith. She used to . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Hilda Smith. I've heard of her.

LUCIA: Well, we called her Jane. Those that loved her the most called her Jane. By the way, I just got a letter from her. They're having her 90th birthday on the eighteenth of this month in Washington, and I got an invitation to go there. She took a liking to me and she encouraged me. I came back again in 1930 just a few months before I left the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers Union] in 1930. I was rooming with a Jewish girl, and she says, "Why don't you come away? Here you are twenty-eight years old and you haven't got a suit to your name and you can't get away from family discipline. You know, you don't have your freedom."

INTERVIEWER: At that point were you also giving your salary to your family?

LUCIA: Yes, we were still giving. Well, we had to in order to do things. I didn't begrudge that at all. In fact, that gave me the idea of building a union because by pooling your resources you're so much stronger, you know. By want of change that train was still calling me; that eerie sound of the train was still in my ears. She said, "Come to New York and I'll get a job for you in the Necktie Workers." Well, the Necktie Workers was not an international; it was just a local in New York. And the unions were being faced with what they called the runaway shops. From New York City they were running away to small towns where they would pay the people anything they wanted. They'd leave the factory--the workers in the factory--high and dry and go to another town. And the people would go to work the next morning and no factory. The machinery was gone, had been disappeared. So we had to follow where these factories went. They were sent to New Haven, Connecticut. I think it was all Italians--they were breaking in all Italian girls. I said, "You know, I have an idea. You let me go in and work--bore from within, so to speak. I'd be of much more use to you on the inside so I can get acquainted with the people

LUCIA: and give you names and addresses; give you all the information going on, and at the same time build a cadre of people who would be really and truly interested in building the union."

INTERVIEWER: Could we go back just a minute to the summer school and how you happened to decide to go out on your own?

LUCIA: Well, I think between Elizabeth Hiss of the [YWCA] Industrial Department and the Bryn Mawr . . .

INTERVIEWER: Were you still active with the Industrial Department at that point?

LUCIA: Yes, I still was, to a degree I was. And the fact that the educational work, the universities opening up their doors, and so many workers' education schools starting all over the country with the effort of Hilda Smith or Jane Smith, as we call her, and Bryn Mawr; and there was . . .

INTERVIEWER: There was a Southern School for Workers.

LUCIA: Oh yes, Southern. I knew that one, too. One in California, and there was that--well, my memory isn't that good.

INTERVIEWER: How were your classes there? I mean, what did you do for the six to eight weeks you were there?

LUCIA: They were the six most delightful weeks. If ever I learned the expansion of the world and its problems, I learned it there. It was just a smattering. I call it a smattering of ignorance, because for me, I was so ignorant on a good many things that were going on all over the world. You see, living in Rochester, outside of going to the labor lycee, which we called the Red Hall.... I used to go with my brother who was in the IWW: I used to sneak out and go. I wanted to know more about it, and I felt that unless I learned these six weeks in school.... They'd have, for instance, everything. They started with the English class, the grammar and all; a certain era, and they'd tie it all up with dramatics and everything. It was a wonderful system of doing it. They'd go from era to the other, because they started with the English Industrial Revolution. You know, that's where I learned an awful [lot] about it.

INTERVIEWER: How did they tie it up with dramatics?

LUCIA: Dramatics? Hilda Smith--Jane--loved dramatics, and we'd have the nations all represented, especially because we did come from all over. All these workers coming from.... Some could hardly speak English: they still spoke with accents. And you could feel the vibration, the response to this wonderful opportunity that had been offered to us. We even looked at the sky and learned something about the sky. They even brought it to the science

LUCIA: classes, and we learned about science, you know, and about animals and we'd have . . .

INTERVIEWER: So it was really broad.

LUCIA: Yes, it was very broad. In that short period of time, you can imagine how much we had to absorb. Then we went to industries, too. We went to coal mines and we actually saw people in various operations. So my world kept getting bigger and bigger and I was getting more and more excited, and I was having skates on my feet or wings on my body. I wanted to fly where I heard of anything that was worthwhile. So when this job was offered to me, I thought it was a golden opportunity for me to really learn more about what it is that, how best to approach the workers in joining a union. It was very hard to organize in those days because they had the black lists and the yellow dog contracts and all the things that were so bad for workers.

INTERVIEWER: How did you family feel about your leaving at that point?

LUCIA: Well, my family were not ignorant. They thought that if.... Well, it was a blow to them because Italian girls don't leave home. But they accepted it very gracefully. I was really very pleased. And I wrote my sister that I loved so much and said, "I'm sorry to leave you with this burden, but you have to break the fact that I'm not returning. I'm going out to work, to work on my own. And I'll try to send money home as often as I can." In those days they paid for organization work, but you could hardly call it money. In fact, I made less than I did in the factory while I was organizing.

So the strike broke out because in this plant we found that they were paying people . . . for six weeks they were paying them for nothing. They said, "We're training them; we're teaching them." At the end of six weeks, they'd pick the nicest ones--"We'll hold them"--and then start all over again with another crew, which meant that they were getting their work done for nothing. So I brought all that to the outside organizer who was Rose Sullivan. She was from the office--she was from the Telephone Workers Union. She was beautiful, an Irish lass if ever there was one. And she was the outside contact, I was the inside contact.

INTERVIEWER: And what organization was she working out of?

LUCIA: Who--Rose Sullivan? She's dead; she died very young.

INTERVIEWER: But at that time, what organization was she working out of?

LUCIA: She was with the Telephone Workers Union.

INTERVIEWER: But when this strike was going on.

LUCIA: Then she was borrowed from . . . she was an officer apparently

LUCIA: from the AF of L organizing committee. Well, we had strikes and we lasted, the strikes lasted nine months.

INTERVIEWER: I read about that in the interview that you did with the person in Georgia.

LUCIA: It broke my heart because they really tried, that New York local really held on and paid them strike benefits week after week. And those valiant strikers--they were wonderful. It was the coldest weather--twenty degrees below zero. Let's see, the strike started on the twelfth of February and it ended the day before Thanksgiving. The last day they got strike benefits. By that time, I was the only one left there carrying the load, and the work was getting more difficult and they saw it was a losing cause, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you living at that point?

LUCIA: I was living with an Italian family who knew that I was a union organizer but never told it. I pretended I was an orphan. They used to call me Little Orphan Annie. Here I had thirteen brothers and sisters and I was a Little Orphan Annie. And I could put on a pathetic--I should have been an actress--a very pathetic story. And, "I need to work." So one day the boss calls me and he says, "Carmen, there's somebody in this shop that is telling tales to the union, and I'd give anything in the world to find out who it is. Now, you're very, very popular with the girls. I noticed that everybody likes you. Would you help me? If you found that anybody belonged to the union, would you come and tell me and let me know?" And I said, "What's in it for me?" which would be a natural answer, you know. "What's in it for me? What will I get for it? I'm not going to do it for nothing." I was a piece-worker, too. Well, he said, "What do you want?" and I said, "I want to work steady," I didn't want any layoffs. "I want to work steady because I'm an orphan and I need the money and need to take care of myself." And he said, "Well, that's fine." And I said, "How do I work it?" He said, "When I give you a signal to go follow that girl or those people, you go into the ladies' room and see what they say and come back and tell me." And I said, "You know, I'll have to talk for the union because if I talk against the union, they'll never say another word. They'll be afraid I'll come back and snitch on them." He said, "Well, whatever you think." He really believed it, that I was willing to take the job for what it was worth.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do in the hours that you weren't working then? Did you . . .

LUCIA: Well, I worked on the machine. I made some money on ties. I learned how to make ties.

INTERVIEWER: But on the campaign at night when you finished work what were you doing?

LUCIA: Oh, at night I didn't dare go. At night what I would do is I would meet Rose Sullivan and the other organizers.

INTERVIEWER: And discuss strategy?

LUCIA: And discuss strategy, and I'd say, "I just found out that so and so was for the union. And now she's ripe: you'd better go and get her, go and get him," or whoever it was. And in a few days I had a few more, because I went back and told him just the opposite: the ones that were for it I said were against it and--I mean, no, the ones that were against it, well, I said it the opposite. I'm getting a little mixed up now. The ones that were for it, I told him were against it. That's right. And the ones that were against it, I told him were for the union, which meant that the persecution would start the very next day against these people. And they'd begin to hound them and harrass them and they'd get so disgusted. Then I'd call Rose and her group and I'd say, "You go and see so and so because you'll be able to get a card." That's how we got them. We got the majority in no time, and the strike was called. That's when he learned that.... He didn't learn that I was an organizer. He just learned that the girls liked me and that, you know, I was just acting. I begged the man who ran the strike from New York because . . .

INTERVIEWER: You felt that would be too big a betrayal.

LUCIA: A betrayal. Anyway, the day before Thanksgiving, I had to give him the news that I was leaving and that there was nothing more that I could do. I said, "The money has run out"--hundreds of thousands of dollars ran out.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about this point? This was your first real organizing campaign?

LUCIA: Yes, this was my first campaign where I was almost totally, where I was responsible. It broke my heart. We had a lot of help from Yale, by the way. I forgot to mention . . .

INTERVIEWER: I read about that.

LUCIA: Rose Sullivan was the type of person that could, could ingratiate herself with the rich women, you know. I'd get the material for her, get the little girls that should be interviewed, that looked like they'd never had a square meal in their lives. And she would enlist at least their sympathy to the extent it would help. And then we had the Yale students that would come and help us in the morning. And I don't know if you read about the incident where the wife of the president of the Chamber of Commerce was arrested!

INTERVIEWER: Yes! [laughter]

LUCIA: She hadn't believed it until she saw how we were manhandled.

INTERVIEWER: This is old territory for you here now that you're living in Connecticut again.

LUCIA: Yes, but it doesn't mean a thing to me. I haven't been here since 1930.

INTERVIEWER: So 1930 is how many years--forty-six years?

INTERVIEWER: Did you keep in touch over the years with other women you met at the Bryn Mawr Summer School?

LUCIA: Yes, I've met with girls I kept in touch with. I have a whole folder this big with Jane Smith. I was also nominated to be on the [board] representing the students of the Affiliated Schools. I was on the National Board of the Affiliated Schools for Women Workers. So I kept in touch with her in all my activities through the years.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you suppose they stopped having them?

LUCIA: Well, there was no further need for it in the first place. People began to have the opportunity to go to school a little longer than usual. And the universities, some of them--Bryn Mawr never got over the shock of being called the hotbed of radicalism. And the Communists, you know--Communists used to have a habit of getting hold of anything that they could do their own propaganda work [with]. And if it was a Southern School or whatever kind of a worker's school, they would be right there to get hold of it. So they began to have a red tinge. Not that the universities were red, but they were innocently bringing in people who had no business being there. When I say Communists, I know it sounds funny today with detente and now.... Well anyway, from there I went to, I met Abe Club from the Shirtworkers in New York City.

INTERVIEWER: And that was part of the Amalgamated [Clothing Workers Union]?

LUCIA: Yes, that was part of it. I was out of work. I had already given up.... I had been working for the Tieworkers and I was in Philadelphia. We had a general strike in Philadelphia, and that was a beautiful sight.

INTERVIEWER: Well, tell me about how you met your husband and . . .

LUCIA: My husband was the bookkeeper in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in Rochester.

INTERVIEWER: So you had known him for quite a long time.

LUCIA: Oh yes, I knew him. The marriage didn't last very long, but that's a long story. It's nobody's fault. He was very ill, and I was very successful, and well, all kinds of reasons. It's nobody's

LUCIA: fault, you know.

INTERVIEWER: How long did the marriage last about?

LUCIA: Seven years. Not quite seven years, but it had begun to.... What happened was when I was transferred and getting ahead of the game, well, he wanted me to . . .

INTERVIEWER: Well, actually, you see,. I have most of that on the other interview.

LUCIA: Oh, you have?

INTERVIEWER: So I'd really like to concentrate on what I don't have.

LUCIA: Well, why don't you ask me questions, then. Actually, when I got beaten up in Chicago on the picket line--you read about that--I swore I'd never go back to the.... They left me high and dry without any money and the Jewish Labor Movement came to my help.

INTERVIEWER: This is the Amalgamated that you're talking about?

LUCIA: I thought, "How many times do I have to get my neck....?" you know, and then I began to think that I'd never go back to organizing again. I went home very broken, broken in spirit and broken in my bones, too, from the hospitalization from the beating I got in Chicago. But then Jane Smith heard that I was out of work and she began to look out for me, be on the lookout for work for me. She found work in some program of the government, WPA--I don't know what--educational work. And I was doing some clerical work.

INTERVIEWER: This was in the 1930's still?

LUCIA: Still in the 1930's. Yes, because I went to San Francisco in 1935. And then I had the Shirtworkers in 1934, in Albany, New York. That you know about; that was an Amalgamated that disappointed me, too. And so--I forget what I'm asked--that's what happens to me.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry I got you off your track. So we were just talking about your marriage and um . . .

LUCIA: Oh yes. Well, I talk very little about it because it was during the Depression and he got very ill. We didn't have a suit to our name and we didn't know who to turn to except my family was wonderful from Rochester. They kept coming to New York even though they didn't like the idea that I married him because he was a divorced man. And, finally, they discovered it was a diseased kidney--cancer. And they finally removed it and then I became pregnant and Hilda Smith heard that I still didn't have a way of taking care of myself, so she made arrangements through the hospital to have me taken care of free of charge, to have my baby. And I also had an operation while I was seven months pregnant.

INTERVIEWER: As though you didn't have enough troubles.

LUCIA: [laughs] I had to have that, too. Well, when I came out, and I.... When I was beaten up in Chicago, that's how I had to.... Some girls read about me in the newspaper and they felt very sorry that I had been beaten up so severely, and they came out to see me and they said, "We're from the millinery union, and we read about you; and we'd like to help you. Why don't you come to New York and see our boss. He's looking for organizers." All right. So when I got back and found that my husband and I needed a job, I had to get back to work. I went to see Max Zaritsky--he was the international president of the Millinery Workers Union. So he said, "You understand, of course, when your name was turned in to me, and what your background was, I looked into it. And I found it very questionable."

INTERVIEWER: In terms of your relationship with the Amalgamated?

LUCIA: Yes, I suppose he had been.... He knew Petofsky or Sidney Hillman, whoever it was that was left by that time. I said, "Mr. Zaritsky"--and I needed that job very badly. I said, "If you do any of the things that the other unions have done since I've been with them to not permit people to speak openly on any of their problems without punishing them, I'd do the same thing all over again. So you might just as well know that I won't change my attitude, and it has nothing to do with any kind of 'isms'. It only is with humanities." And I got up and I said, "Well, thank you for the interview," or something of that sort. I thought this was it; I had cooked my own goose. He says, "Wait a minute. I'm not dismissing you. I kind of like that spirit if it's guided right. I think you have some good material to contribute. I'm going to take a chance on you." He said, "So I'm sending you to California." Well, when I heard California, in New York....

INTERVIEWER: It must have sounded far away.

LUCIA: Far away but good, because that's what the doctor had ordered for my husband: sunshine, lots of sunshine. So I said, "Alright." I think they paid me thirty-five dollars a week is what I think I started with.

INTERVIEWER: Now, had you already had your baby by then?

LUCIA: I had had my baby. My husband used to take care of it while I was working in . . .

INTERVIEWER: In Albany.

LUCIA: In Albany; I was working in Albany. And my husband was taking care of the baby; a very good person, a very fine person. And so we talked it over. He said, "Why not? You go ahead. I'll take care of the baby and as soon as we get enough money together,

LUCIA: you can send for me." And I didn't know at the time that they were supposed to move family.

INTERVIEWER: Now they probably would have thought of it if you'd have been a man.

LUCIA: But they didn't. They never considered me the head of the family; never, even with a child. And I didn't know, wouldn't even dream of asking to be helped, and so this was.... By the first of May--I got there in March sometime; the fifteenth--and by the first of May, my husband and my baby arrived, and I've never forgotten that they arrived. They kept me in Los Angeles just a very, very short time. We had a very disastrous strike because I--when I arrived there I was supposed to be on my way to San Francisco. When I arrived there, there were a lot of Bryn Mawr girls who knew me, and we started to sing songs, and they were getting ready to strike the next day. I didn't know anything except these girls and me. I was very fast with the....

INTERVIEWER: Mimeograph?

LUCIA: Mimeograph--I was good. And right away, quick, I got the union songs printed, and by the time the executive board of that local met.... They had another girl [organizer] that had come with me. Said, "Well, we don't care much for the other girl; we do like Carmen and hope she can stay." So I stayed in Los Angeles for a while and then they lost the strike because the hall was full of Communist slogans. Everywhere I looked it was full of Communist slogans.

INTERVIEWER: And that turned the workers off?

LUCIA: Sure. They were called a Communist union, and he was head of the furriers union, this man--I can't think of his name right now. And they put him on our payroll. And so we lost the strike, and then they sent me to San Francisco. It was shortly after the General Strike of 1935. You know, there was a General Strike in San Francisco. Oh, I was so excited when I was in Los Angeles. I kept saying, "I wish I could be in the General Strike in San Francisco." And a few months after the settlement of the strike I was sent to San Francisco. I couldn't do no wrong in that city no matter what I touched. I don't care what I touched turned to gold. And when I say turned to gold, I had more luck--the Milliners, any of the materials, and I'm going to give you some to take with you. I organized the men. Ironically, I got the men first. I couldn't get the girls. And I conceived the idea of calling the strike, and there were about fifteen or eighteen plants, maybe nineteen plants. And it's very hard when they're small plants and you have to go from one place to another. It isn't like one large plant where one circular would do the trick, you know, or one speech would do the trick. You've got to work that much harder. And I was alone then and in a short period

LUCIA: of time, in six months, I had organized the four or five hundred milliners. Then came the capmakers, and then came the men's hat industry. We had consolidated in 1934, if you remember--there was a consolidation of the two unions. I had them all organized so I had time on my hands. And a little girl, very young girl, came to see me one day. And she was from the five and ten cent stores--Woolworth's. It seems that the warehousemen's union had had a strike and she refused to cross the picket line, she and several others. And they were . . .

INTERVIEWER: At the store where she worked she refused?

LUCIA: Yes, at the store, and they wouldn't take her back after the strike was over in the five and ten cent store. She went to the retail clerk's associaton, which was a very . . .

INTERVIEWER: That was the AF of L union?

LUCIA: AF of L union, yes. His name was Disespi, Disespi. I used to call him Dispepsia, but [laugh] I think it was something else. But she asked, "Can you help us?" And I said, "Well, I don't know what...."

INTERVIEWER: Your fame had spread by that point.

LUCIA: Yes, it did, apparently. I said, "I'll tell you, Marion, I don't know what we can do, but we can get some leaflets out, and we can try it. Let's get some leaflets out." I got a first leaflet out, and called a meeting. The milliners had a large hall. We called a meeting, and lo and behold, at the first meeting we had about 250, 300 people out of all the stores. You know, there were all kinds of stores.

INTERVIEWER: They weren't all dime stores.

LUCIA: Eh?

INTERVIEWER: Were they all dime stores?

LUCIA: No, we went after all of them: variety stores, and the big stores--the City of Paris, the I. Magnin, all these beautiful stores, even Gumps. Have you heard of Gumps?

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes.

LUCIA: Even Gumps; we went after Gumps. And lo and behold, and they kept mushrooming, mushrooming, mushrooming. Every time we'd call a meeting, we'd double up and double. Finally, I sent a wire to the head of the Retail Clerks to send me 5000 applications. He must have thought I was crazy. And he said, "Send me fifty dollars and I'll send you the 5000 applications."

INTERVIEWER: You were going to have to pay for applications?

LUCIA: And I was doing this for nothing, I was doing this for nothing. So I took the application. I duplicated it on the mimeograph machine, and we used the mimeographed ones. We didn't change any of the wording; it was legal. Then we went to the San Francisco Labor Council, where I got in trouble with Harry Bridges.

INTERVIEWER: Was he in a position of power with the Central Labor Council?

LUCIA: Oh, they hated his guts because they thought he was a communist, you know. But I angered him about something else, that had nothing to do with their problems. I went and I appealed to them that we were going to organize on an industrial basis, "I'm going to organize the stores and I don't want anybody claiming anybody in these stores and splitting it up into slices of pie. We're just going to weaken the whole thing by splitting the union." They didn't take me seriously, they thought it couldn't be done.

(Break in tape)

LUCIA: Well, anyway, after they began to see the success of it, when we got to about two or three thousand people, each one began to claim jurisdiction. And my international president, bless his heart, I love that man, he was a wonderful soul, you know, Max Zaritsky. He says, "What can I do with you?" He calls me up, "Everybody's calling me up, 'Your girl is doing this, your girl is doing that.'" And he says, "I didn't tell her to do anything. I can't stop her, if you can stop her stop her." So there was one man there, I'm ashamed I can't remember his name, but he was the head of the hotel and restaurant workers union. He was quite liberal. He says, "Well, I for one, am not going to make any claims for the people who work in the restaurants." He says, "I believe in the industrial unions and besides, the CIO is already organized, and if we didn't do it our way, the CIO would come in. . . ."

INTERVIEWER: Well, so the union that you were involved in was still the Retail Clerks?

LUCIA: Yes, it was still the Retail Clerks. It never got to, it never went beyond the Retail Clerks. Because, not that I didn't want to, but I thought, "Why should I give them something that I worked so hard for," you know? I was called their official advisor. It was understood I didn't want any money, I didn't want any presents, and I didn't want any thanks. I just wanted to do some work and help them. So this man, when he made that statement, he dared me, he said, "I dare anybody to bow to Carmen Lucia doing the fine work she's doing. We owe her a great deal of thanks." He later came into national president of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union, and he always kept teasing Max Zaritsky, "Some day I'm going to steal that girl of yours," you know, "I sure could use her." Well, anyway, we finally--I had a terrible rift with the congressman, who later became a congressman--I can't think of his name right now, it escapes me--but he

LUCIA: was very active with the bakery and confectionary workers' union, Jack [Shelley]--it will come to me sometimes. You'll probably get it from the other books. And we had a meeting, we were going to call a strike. We had negotiations starting, and we couldn't get anywhere with the head of the Retail Clerks' Association. They had formed an association; they weren't an association until the union came in. So when I addressed their first meeting, the first meeting we had, I said, "You owe it to us that we got you people organized. You used to cut each other's throats until the union came in. Now that the union is here, you want to cut our throats."

When we had a meeting to call the strike, Jack Shelley--who later became congressman, he was the head of the Council, San Francisco Labor Council--and he wouldn't permit a strike to be called. He said, "You have no right to encourage a strike. You've got no money and you're not going to get any support from any of us. We're all going to cross your picket line." Well, of course, when he took the floor and he made that announcement, all my talking was in vain. So we settled the best way we could. I didn't like it but we did. That left the variety stores out, the five-and-ten. They're not going to do that to me at the five-and-ten cent stores. So when I called the strike, I didn't ask Jack Shelley to come because I had been to the warehousemen's union and I had told the warehousemen, "Will you support us? The girls that came to me for help was blacklisted for refusing to cross your line. Now are you going to cross our line when we have a strike in the variety stores?" They said, "Well, Carmen, we have no choice. There's a clause in our contract that says that we must. We can't respect the secondary boycotts whatever they call them." And I said, "I'll tell you, I'm going to make it hard for you." He said, "You do that, you make it hard for us, but don't tell anybody I said so. Then we'll have an excuse to honor it." The reason for that was that the warehouse in San Francisco fed all the variety stores in all over California; that was the ace-in-the-hole, and I knew that. So when we had the meeting, Jack Shelley came to try to tell them they were crazy to have a strike, and I won. They voted for the strike and we called it and in four days we had them licked, just exactly four days. They were called the million dollar babies from the five-and-ten cent stores, and I had them dressed up in white bathing suits, beautiful, with red ribbons around them, and bring their babies on their shoulders and everything. And it [the leaflet] said, "Take Our Mothers Off the Street. Little Children Like to Eat," and all that stuff. And we won. Well, I'll never forget the morning of Friday the thirteenth of August, 1936. It was the only time I accepted a gift. It was a little watch with the inscription, "In Memory of August 13." When I called the union to bolster our picket line, I was going to have a meeting of the five-and-ten cent girls and boys, they did. They held. . . . The girls and boys didn't know what they were being called for. I said, "Who's superstitious about Friday 13?" All the hands went up. "That's one time you're not going to be superstitious ever in your life. We got the union shop." That's what I cared about, the union shop, "And we got the raise besides." We had already negotiated

LUCIA: the raise. Well, you never saw such hoopla in all your life. And there was. . . . I don't know whether you remember Jenny Matyas, who used to be the vice-president of the ILG there in California. She and I became bosom friends. We used to work together; every time she had a fight I'd help her, and every time. . . . And then there was the era of sit-down strikes. We'd guard at night and bring food to people who were waiting, who were in the plant, and we'd bring them pillows and covers or whatever it was they needed. It was an exciting period of time. And what broke my heart was the night when the CIO. . . . The AF of L gave orders to all those who had continued to be active in Committee for Industrial Organization, they are going to lose out, they're no longer members of the AF of L. To see that night when they walked out of the San Francisco Labor Council and I saw Jenny going out with tears in her eyes. And some of the people that I loved and had worked with, in other unions that were not going to be with the AF of L alone. They wanted to be the two unions together. Well, then we merged, eventually they merged, and some didn't merge for a long time, the Amalgamated was out for a long time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the hatters, did they become part of the CIO?

LUCIA: Our vice-president was one of the seven international presidents that started the CIO along with [John L.] Lewis. But when he saw that it meant a division in the ranks, that there was going to be a terrific division, they were going to be torn apart, he stepped out. He didn't want to get . . .

INTERVIEWER: When it became the Congress he stepped out?

LUCIA: He stepped out when it became the Congress of Industrial Organization. But Harry Bridges had it in for me, because he wanted to have control of the Retail Clerks and I wouldn't let him; I put every obstacle in his path. He'd come in dramatically, you know, with body guards. He comes in like a mafia person would come in at night. Because we had commies in our union, they used to invite him on the QT. They knew I didn't like it, but they'd invite him. He'd come. Well, I had to be gracious, I couldn't. . . . So he made a speech, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," and he meant me, of course. He thought I was aspiring to be the person to run the union. I had no aspiration, I never wanted that kind of job, and I'll tell you why: I was afraid I'd lose my contact with the people and I'd become greedy. I'd become totally unaware. I saw too much of that going on when they got jobs that went to their heads. They weren't the same people and I didn't want to become one of them. I'm still an organizer.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what was your relationship with the Retail Clerk's Union at this point?

LUCIA: At this point then, of course, my job was done. Even though Gumps called me and I always lump that with. . . . Did you read about that, the interview with Gumps?

INTERVIEWER: No.

LUCIA: He wanted to know how. . . . He wanted to meet the young lady who organized his clerks. He said he'd tried over and over again and couldn't get her. So it was like a command performance, I was going to go before the king, you know. And to tell you the truth, when I went into that store I was aghast at the wealth, the beautiful things I saw. You've heard of Mary Anne Davies' home being furnished by Hearst, when that took place?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I remember that.

LUCIA: Yes. I used to look at everything as I went along and I came from one chamber to another, I was so chagrined, and then I looked at the chair where I was sitting down, it was sixteen thousand dollars! I said I'd never sat on such a plush place in all my life, I was just myself. He said, "Stand up young lady, I want to see what you look like," just as though he was the king, you know. I did. "Where did you come from?" I said, "I was born in Italy." He said, "How did you get in this kind of--how could a nice person like you be involved in such work?" You know, you've heard that before. And then he asked, "How did you get my people?" He started to tell me what type of people work in his place; they have to be educated. They have to know all the history of every piece of antique that is there. They've got to know about the jade collection which is almost internationally known. They've got to be manicured, and they've got to be this and they've got to be that. And then he asked me the question, "How did you get them?" I said, "You just gave me the answer." "What do you mean?" I said, "You want them to have all those facts, all that knowledge, and you don't pay for it. You pay the same as Sears Roebuck pays. Same wages. So why shouldn't they respond to the possibility of bettering their conditions? And we got them." Whether today the union still is that kind of union, I don't know. But we licked them real good, the employers. And then I got a call from Max Zaritsky, and . . .

INTERVIEWER: You worked directly under the president of the union?

LUCIA: International. Yes, I was an international representative. I was never in a local, except in Rochester when I first started. He said, "Carmen, we need help. You heard about the beatings in Texas"--that was in 1935, 1936, 1937, somewhere around there--"You heard about the goon squads?" You know, they were beating up all the CIO people who were trying to organize the automobile workers' union. They had brought in ex-convicts to beat up all the people. Oh, and they beat up the lawyers--they tarred and feathered them. Well, it so happened that they still felt we were CIO because Max Zaritsky's origination in the picture. . . . And stupidly or not, realizing the danger of not making himself known to the AF of L, he never let the AF of L know that he was in the city with another organizer organizing the hat workers. So they were trying to organize the milliners in Dallas, Texas. He said, "George Beyer was beaten up very, very badly and they

LUCIA: had to just call the strike. He was invited by one of the employers. . . ." There were seventeen shops in Dallas at the time, and that he was called up by one of the employers. They wanted to see him, they wanted to negotiate. So he went in the middle of the day and he didn't get to first base with them. But as he was about to leave, one of the employers excused himself to make a telephone call. When he [George] came out, he was grabbed by these goons. He was beaten unmercifully with blackjacks. They stepped on his eye. . . . Excuse me. (weeping) And they took him in the car and threw him somewhere out in the country, you know? Left him for dead. Some good samaritans happened to pass by and saw this man. He had crept up to the curb, and he was bleeding from all over, and he took him in the car and brought him to the hospital and left him there. He was afraid to get involved, whoever the good samaritan was. And then they weren't satisfied with that. They wanted to throw him--they had gotten into the hospital, the goons, and they were going to throw him out of the window. So the union had to get him out of Texas in a hurry. They took an ambulance and got him on a plane and brought him to. . . . Reading, Pennsylvania was his home, but I don't know whether he went to Reading. Zaritsky said, "We can't leave these strikers alone now." The woman that was there didn't know too much about unions, running a strike, and they were terribly demoralized about what happened to their leader. "And we thought, with your experience, you'd be able to hold them together." "But," he says, "I think you'll have to call the strike off." So I arrived the day that he called the strike off. You never saw such tears on the part of the people; they didn't want to go back. They felt very bad about their leader being beaten up and they were afraid to go back. So some of them were taken back and some of them never were taken back. I had about a hundred people on my hands who couldn't find a job anywhere, anywhere in Texas. They were blacklisted from one end of Texas to the other. And what could I do? I didn't know what to do, I felt they were on my hands and we couldn't keep taking care of them financially, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Was your family still in California?

LUCIA: My family was still in California. But there had already been signs of my husband--well, I don't know anyway. He was interested in someone else; I don't blame him. But I always asked. . . . He always came. . . . I included him in everything or I asked him to help and he was good help because it was partly his work. I had in mind then, if I don't get anything else out of this situation, I did it with Mel, and the forethought was to give him a job in the office, because that was his work in the Amalgamated. He was in the financial end of it. He was treasurer there [in Rochester]. Well, he fell in love with a girl about twenty-five years his junior; beautiful girl, lovely girl, and so I gave in. Once I thought, "Well, I can't blame him. In a way, he's broken hearted about his life, you know. He's been out of work for seven years and the illness and then the Depression; it was not his fault." So when I stayed in Dallas long enough to. . . .

LUCIA: Oh, and I decided to go see the clergyman. The prominent people in the community couldn't care less, they didn't care, They were talking about isolating the prostitutes from the rest of the people. I said, "Don't you know, aren't you interested in knowing why so many girls are prostitutes today? Why don't you go and find out what they were earning." They were getting seven dollars a week. "You know, there is nothing there for them. That's what makes them prostitute themselves." They wanted to isolate them in a different district. So one of the ministers, who was supposed to be the top minister, Episcopalian I think he was, said, "Well, don't you know, Miss Lucia, we'd love to help, but you know our main support comes from the very people that you're criticizing with revolution." And, boy, did I give it to him. I said, "That wouldn't be what Christ would say. He chased the money changers out of his temple, and you're talking about being helped by these people and being afraid of losing them? I wouldn't even want their money." So he said, "Why don't you write a pamphlet and sent it out to all the prominent people, lawyers and so forth?" And I wrote a real nice note, that's something else. (Indicating piece of paper from folder)

INTERVIEWER: How did you find the people different in Texas than in Rochester and in California?

LUCIA: Well, people are people if you didn't dig down enough. The depth of the people vary from community to community. For instance, in the South, it was an experience for me because they were so full of prejudices, black prejudices. Well, look, even the city of Atlanta, Georgia. And I love that city. They were even anti-semitic, because at the time there were only about twenty-five thousand Jews in Atlanta. And Joe Jacobs, a brilliant young man, a lawyer out of law school, trying to. . . . An old Socialist background, you know, wanted to help representing labor. Well, the AF of L was a little timid because he had also started to be interested in helping the automobile workers, which were CIO. They didn't like the idea of him fooling around with both of them, so. We had to call Bill Green, and I talked to Bill Green myself. "You tell the AF of L to leave our people alone. We're AF of L people and to let Joe Jacobs alone. They're harrassing and hounding him. Let him make a living." Because he was having an awful time making a living.

INTERVIEWER: He was a labor lawyer?

LUCIA: Yes, well, he was, even though he was born in Alabama, he was a labor lawyer and he was a Jew. You couldn't. . . . There were two strikes against you as far as that would be in the communities of Georgia. Well, he was vindicated and he became a very prominent labor lawyer, a very excellent lawyer and it's almost the entire southeast. He has a lovely family, a son who is also a lawyer, and he's still active in everything under the sun, whether for the black people--he worked very, very hard for them. Now my first experience with the black people was in Georgia.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you in Atlanta?

LUCIA: In Atlanta, I lived for a long time. Because I was moved any number of times. I went to South Norwalk, Connecticut. I had a strike there. But I came back and even when I went to Texas I tried to go back to. . . . I wanted to be in one place where, at least, I could call home, even if I wasn't there. My daughter was being moved all the time, the poor child. She was shunted from pillar to post.

INTERVIEWER: How did. . . . Sometimes it has its advantages as well as disadvantages.

LUCIA: Well, it must have, because she's grown into a magnificent mother, a wonderful wife, and quite intelligent and interested in worthwhile causes. So, I'm very proud of the fact that what little help I gave her must have been of some help or other. But I think it came because of the travesty of what was going on around her, the constant change. She had horrible fear. I had to send her to Knapsonian school. By the way, if I lived a little more lavishly, it was not from the pay I got from the union, it's because I befriended a woman who was a very lonely person who owned a home and she rented part of her apartment to me. She had cancer. And when she died, she left me her property, so that was the first time I began to breathe with some degree of giving Margie more than her share. But I wanted to send her to a school where I wouldn't have to worry about her, a boarding school. But there were only two schools and both of them were fashionable. One very fashionable, and Knapsonian was medium class. But, at least, she went there for four years, years which helped a whole lot. And then she went to Brenal College for a couple of years. So we were very good friends with the Jacobs, and he helped a great deal in all the movements. But, to go back to the black people, I also was active in the Atlanta laundries. Know what they were getting an hour? Seventeen cents an hour when I went to organize them. That must have been in 1942, 1943, or 1944, or something like that. That's where I had my first experience.

INTERVIEWER: Did this happen the same way the other thing. . . .? Did they come to you saying, "We need some help?"

LUCIA: Yes, people would come.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't the Laundry Workers Union ever provide any organizers for this?

LUCIA: They did later on. Abner Cromney, he was wonderful. Afterwards, the Amalgamated came and took them in, you know, but at first they didn't have anybody. The fellow who was the head of the central body was a nobody. He'd milk them dry if he could hook it. Then I--the Rushton dollworkers--stuffed doll toys--came to me. They were practically all black. They did have some white ones. I did have some trouble with the police there. He said, "I told

LUCIA: you I don't want these people on the same side. The blacks should be on this side, and the whites on this side." I said, "Well, you come and tell them." I said, "I've told them over and over again." But I didn't, because I wanted them to back us. If you turned to them and said, "Go back. . . ." Because I didn't want to have too much trouble on the question, you know. I had other work to be done. But what would happen was as soon as the policeman's back was turned. . . . The black people were always entertaining, they were always dancing and laughing and had musical instruments, and the white people would actually go and show that there was no discrimination if they'd only let them be themselves.
Then when I brought them to the labor temple, they told me that they couldn't use the ladies' room. I told them, "You go ahead and use the ladies' room; you go and use the fountains." And I said to the central labor body, "If you want me to do organization work in this city, you better furnish me with another labor temple if you don't want these people in the labor temple. Otherwise, they're going to use the fountains and they're going to use the restrooms." And they'd be seated in the back, you know. But despite all my fighting with the white people in Atlanta they all liked me, they really did. They had a certain amount of admiration, I guess you'd call it, for my nerve.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do with your free time?

LUCIA: What do you mean?! What free time?! (laughter) You know, I'd go to cities where there were all kinds of beautiful things to see and I never saw them. I never took time to go and see them.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do in the evenings?

LUCIA: In the evening? I always used to go out and do organization work. When I was in Chicago I used to. . . . There was one time when I. . . . Well, and when I was in the Ozarks I was afraid to go out by myself because country lanes, you know, I was in Winchester, Tennessee, and they have no street numbers, and they go about five miles and you get to a fork in the road and there's a couple of elm trees or whatever it was that they told me you turn right, and you keep going and you keep asking. That's how I'd find people at night, with a lantern or with a searchlight, a flashlight.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go around in a car? Did you drive a car?

LUCIA: I drove a car. And, at first, I didn't have a car--until this woman died. She left me her car, too, and then I had to learn the hard way.

INTERVIEWER: But the union didn't furnish you with a car.

LUCIA: No, they left it to me to hire somebody to take me out different evenings. And I was never sure I could get somebody to. And pay them whatever it was. And what more can I tell you?

INTERVIEWER: That's a lovely lamp, by the way.

LUCIA: Oh, that's old fashioned. My brother in Rochester, New York is in the antique business and that's one of his. Marge has some beautiful antiques around.

INTERVIEWER: I noticed that was one thing that you mentioned, that you liked antiques, you had antiques.

LUCIA: And I had to give them up now. I thought it would break my heart, but I found that now I can't hold on to personal possessions. I have all I can do to hold on to my body. You see, I have osteoparosis and my bones are breaking up, little by little. They're breaking up. I know I don't have much longer to live, but I'm to live as best as I can and I found. . . . I finally said, "I can't live alone. I can't hold on to my independence, and my daughter kept insisting that I move in with them. And luckily, she had this extra little bathroom where I could come and go. And I only moved recently. I had bought a mobile home in Westbrook, Connecticut. And it was adorable. I would have loved to have lived in it. I used to. Well, then I wasn't doing any work in the evening, anymore.
Actually, I'll tell you what happened. When I reached the age of sixty-five, I was ready to retire. I told the union I was going to retire. And they said, "Oh, we don't want to lose you." And I said, "Well, if you don't want to lose me, pay me what you pay the men, and I'll stay on a few more years." "No, we're not." Then I said, "I'll work for nothing," which was stupid. And I worked almost until 1974, from 1967 to 1974 for a hundred and forty dollars a month. And I look back and I think, "I'm just a damn fool." You know, that I was so stupid to. . . . I was so proud that if I can't get a man's wage. . . . I gave them hell at the last convention. I gave them an ERA speech they'll never forget. And I got the biggest round of applause. And I said to the girls, "Look, I'm on my way out," I said, "I'm trying to do this for your sake, not mine, because it doesn't mean anything. Not for your sake, but for the women that are in the industry. For heaven sakes, follow it up. Don't let go of it." You know, not one of those women in the convention got up to even say one word?

INTERVIEWER: Were there any female officers?

LUCIA: There was one thing that both the ILG, the clothing trades were famous for having token representation of women on their executive board, on their general board. Is that what you mean, the general executive board? Yes. This is an article that I was very proud of in the Dallas papers that used to hate me like poison: Hatter's Militant Organizer Sets her Route, Fights on Dallas. If you want it, you can have one of these. I took some of these out because . . .

INTERVIEWER: Even in Dallas the newspaper wasn't that anti-labor?

LUCIA: Oh, wasn't it! (laughing) But I'll tell you what happened. Alice Murphy--is that her name? (refers to author of newspaper clipping)

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LUCIA: She and I became very good friends. She snuck that in, but she lost her job after that article. And I felt awfully bad. But I thought she said she knew she could do it.

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