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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

ROSE PALMQUIST

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

by

Mary Ellen Frank

Program on Women and Work

Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations

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ROSE SEILER PALMQUIST

Rose Seiler Palmquist, the daughter of Austrian and Hungarian immigrants, was born on January 14, 1906 in Duluth, Minnesota. When her father left home, Palmquist began working at an early age picking blueberries to help support the family. She continued to work during her high school years, and worked as a cook and a maid in order to attend the University of Minnesota.

After graduation Palmquist worked for several years as a social worker. While working for the State Transient Division, she decided to join the Office and Professional Workers Union and soon became an active member, supporting candidates from the Minnesota Farm Labor Party. She moved to Washington to work as a social worker, but dissatisfied with social work, returned to Minneapolis to work for the Office and Professional Workers Union as a part-time business agent. She lost her job as a result of her involvement with the Teamsters Union.

After World War II, Rose and her second husband, Ed Palmquist, went to work for the Alaskan Railroad. Palmquist became active in the American Federation of Government Employees and was fired by the railroad in 1953 for being a subversive. During this time her second husband left her and Palmquist turned to homesteading to support her children. She was reinstated by the Alaskan Railroad after six years of appeals, receiving back pay for those six years she was unemployed. Palmquist worked for the railroad until 1961 when her job was phased out by computerization.

In 1972 Palmquist returned to active union involvement. She has worked as the director of the Longevity Bonus Program for DRIVE, the political arm of Teamsters' Local 959, and as business representative of a newly formed union organization of the Operating Engineers Union, the Laborers Union and the Teamsters' Union.

In addition to her union activities, Palmquist has been involved in political groups including the League of Women Voters and the Farmer Labor Party in Minnesota, and belongs to the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, Common Cause, and various other organizations. She now works as the coordinator of the Alaskan Teamsters' Union retiree program and as chairperson of the Municipal Commission for Senior Citizens in Juneau and the Older Persons' Action Group.

Oral History Interview

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June 1, 1977

by

Mary Ellen Frank

PALMQUIST: My name is Rose Seiler Palmquist. I was born January 14, 1906, in a suburb of Duluth, Minnesota called Morgantown--a steel town. It was a very snowy day and my father's sister, who had just came over from the old country, gave me my name. My parents were both from a town called Munkatch, at that time Austria-Hungary. I believe it is now either in Hungary or in Czechoslovakia. During the Hitler years, I have a feeling that that town was wiped out because of some anti-Hitlerism that occurred. Both of my sets of grandparents migrated into Austria-Hungary from other parts of Germany.

My mother was Bohemian-German and I believe my father was of some other German speaking group, possibly near the seashore, since the name Seiler means "ropemaker." They migrated into Austria-Hungary at a time when the territory was ceded away from Russia to Austria-Hungary and they took a noble's, a count's, or someone's farm and divided it into segments and wanted to settle it with German people. So that accounts for my grandparents. I never saw them; all four died in Germany . . . in Austria-Hungary.

My father came over at a time when Duluth was importing immigrants from central Europe to work in the saw mills and in the steel mills, and other trades. He was brought over to work in the saw mills. My mother followed him two years later, after my older brother Joseph was born. He was three and a half years old when I was born. When I was about three or three and a half, my father bought a piece of raw ground in Barnum, Minnesota, sight unseen, in size eighty acres, and moved his family up there to a one room frame building, and just enough cleared land to put in a crop. So from there on, it was an uphill grade. This land had been logged over by Weyerhauser Lumber Company, and sold to one of their bookkeepers who then re-sold the land to individual prospective farmers.

PALMQUIST: The community was largely Scandinavian, although we had two next door neighbors who were English and Irish-English combination. There were a few other German families--not very many--and one strictly Irish family in the community. The town was about three hundred and fifty people in the community itself, but it served a farm area of a certain size, possibly fifteen hundred people or so. I first started school in a one room school house, and at that time I was just beginning the English language, as we spoke what was considered "plat Deutsch" or "low German"--not the Berlin German--in our home.

When I was six . . . my folks had just a built a brand new barn and had filled it with hay, and had advanced to the point of having some stock. However, they had borrowed four hundred dollars from the bank, in those days four hundred dollars was a lot of money, in order to build the barn. The barn burned down with most of the stock, and this discouragement was too much for my father, who took off, leaving my mother with my older brother and myself, two other brothers that followed me, and then a sister who was then about six months old.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you at that time?

PALMQUIST: I was six, yeah, I was six years older than my sister. Life was pretty hard in those days. I was just re-starting school in a new school called Central School four and a half miles away, and we were hauled there by a canvas covered school bus on wheels, drawn by horses until the snow came, and then on sleigh. The neighbors were quite sympathetic to my mother being left alone with a small family, but she struggled on with the one cow which she had left and a few chickens and a couple of pigs.

She had John, a single brother, in Duluth who was working in the saw mills and was quite a handsome young blade, but he came up on the farm to help his sister, and so from that time on until he settled on a farm of his own, he lived with the family and accepted a certain responsibility, not only for the provisioning of the family, but also for the discipline of the children. Of course, this didn't set very well with the kids, who ganged up completely against him. And so there was quite a bit of rapport amongst the children, but especially all of us heading with myself and all the younger ones, although my brother was in it to a certain extent, my brother Joseph. When my brother Joseph finished grade school, he was forced by my uncle to go to work to help support the family, although this was very much against his will, as he wished to go on to school. And this was a matter of great concern to him for the rest of his life, because he always felt that he was disadvantaged as compared to the rest of the family.

When my mother had to pick up the pieces on her own, she decided that she would make a life not only for herself, but also an improved situation for her children. She was a woman who had

PALMQUIST: grown up on a farm in Central Europe, where farming was better developed, with better community type organization than we had in northern Minnesota. And also, the conditions were not nearly as severe as far as climate and the things that you could grow were concerned. In Central Europe they had central spinning areas where the girls would gather and when the spinning was done, the boys would come in and they would all play games or dance and have music and song fests and so forth. So that type of farming, where the farmers live in a little type huddle and farm like a wheel spoke going out, they had a great deal more socialization than agriculture in the United States, where the farms are scattered all over the countryside, and people have to go long distances to get together.

My mother was ambitious that her children have a better life and a better education than she herself had. My father had a better education and had served in the Austro-Hungarian army at the time that Austria sent a contingent or a company down into Serbia, and he had been a lieutenant in that army. We had very little contact with my father from then on, although we did hear from him after a while when he was stricken with tuberculosis and was in a state institution.

INTERVIEWER: Rose, did your mother want better educations for both male and female children?

PALMQUIST: Yes. There was no discrimination. I saw no discrimination in the farm life or in the community because everyone worked; all the people around there were fairly limited in income, having only the cream from the dairy cows and the eggs from the chickens to sell, unless they sold hay or potatoes. We had one neighbor, the combined English Irish family, who had a better economic circumstance because the man was the door keeper in the Minnesota legislature and therefore had a better social position and apparently a better income. In addition, they had a hundred and sixty acres which they farmed, which was twice as big as any of the other farmers in that area.

During my high school years I would work, be paid the same amount as that man paid the men, which was five dollars a day, because I was just as good a picker as the best fellows. Before that, we kids all earned money picking wild berries and selling them in town, and most of us usually earned a part of our school clothing by selling the berries that we picked.

We were bought up in a Catholic atmosphere, having church on Sundays and maybe a visiting priest who would give us some Catechism for a week or so during the summer, not every summer, just some of the summers. One summer, we had a dignitary from the Catholic University in Washington D.C. who was there for ten days, and I recall that he sent me a card which mentioned the word "heliotrope" on it. He was making an effort to encourage me to, I suppose,

PALMQUIST: seek a life other than a farm life. My schooling--since I was foreign-born and wore homemade clothes--I was somewhat isolated from the other kids. And as a result, I took up to reading all the books that were in school, and I developed this habit all through my grade school and high school to the extent that I read all the books that were available. This gave me an advantage in the classroom, since I would be better informed than the classmates, and as a result I always got fairly good grades in school, as did also my brothers.

In high school I was very active in all of the activities. I was not good at softball, but I played on the team and I was the person that spurred everybody else on to better performance, like running free runs and hitting field balls if that was necessary or a bunt if that was necessary. In basketball I played guard, and I was not an outstanding player but I was a very rigorous one. I was in the choir, although I had no voice. (laughs) And I took up the oratory one year and declaimed on something or other, which was very emotional. And as I recall, I didn't win the first prize in that either. (laughs)

We always entered things at the fair. Barnum had the Carlton County Fair, which was a fairly outstanding fair for the state of Minnesota . . . not, of course, superior to the state fair, but as a county fair, quite good. And we always entered things. My mother always won first prize on her varied farm display, and I began earning prizes on canned goods from the age of nine on, so we always got some money that way. We drove in with the horse and buggy; our horse was named Mike. Um, let's see, where was I?

INTERVIEWER: The horse named Mike?

PALMQUIST: Oh yes, the horse was named Mike, a horse that my father had purchased before he took off, that was sold by a horse trader that had just come from Montana. This horse was just a big cow pony, and he'd shy at everything and if we got on him, he'd either pitch us off tailwise or headwise by kicking up high in the air. But he finally tuned out, by patience and force, to do the work around the place that had to be done, until we finally got another horse. So anyway, away to the fair we would go with this horse and buggy, and have our picnic lunch with us, and we would each have maybe a quarter to spend; since rides were five cents each, we could have like five rides. Or an ice cream cone for five cents. But we watched the horse races; they had good horse races there. And we saw all the exhibits, and there was lots of things going on that you could look at and participate in. On fourth of Julys, they'd have a regular Independence Day celebration, with races and so on, and I remember how proud my mother was, because I had run in a short race for girls and I had won a bologna sausage, something like a Polish sausage now. I didn't thing it was very much until I

PALMQUIST: got home and my mother exclaimed so about it, thinking it was such a grand prize. So then I, of course, took up track in high school also, and I did win a silver cup at the county track meet by running the 220-yard dash. The next year I was going to do better, but a long-legged Indian gal from Cloquet beat me out.

So the other outstanding thing about school was that the last two years of high school we had a history teacher school superintendent who was for everyone getting the maximum amount of education. And he had quite an influence in our family, as he did in other youngsters who aspired to other things than farm life. And, as a result, I was the first woman, the first girl, from Barnum to go to the University of Minnesota who was not supported by her parents. I went down to St. Paul at the beginning of the summer so that I would have my tuition for fall, which amounted to thirty dollars tuition plus a ten dollar lab fee and maybe a five dollar student fee. It wasn't too much, but in those days it was quite a bit of money. At first, I didn't get a job . . . so I, not knowing my way around the large city, coming from a small town, I stayed at the "Y." I finally ran out of money and I didn't get anything to eat for about three days and I was beginning to look in the garbage cans for some bones to gnaw on or something. And finally I went to work for a Jewish family. That didn't work out, although I did get to fill my tummy, because they insisted on all the separations that an orthodox Jewish family insists upon. But I did get my feet on the ground and then got a job working for a wealthy family as a cook. Then during the school year, I went to work for a friend of this family, because they were in the dental supply business. And I worked for them, and earned enough for my expenses although I lived in St. Paul and that took quite a bit of my time. But I did earn enough to buy some stockings and pay my car fare back and forth, and maybe to buy second hand books at the book store. The first year, let's see, I took college math, English, I had to take, and possibly a foreign language--German, and I also took chemistry. I got an "A" in math, and I think I got a "C" in English composition. And I was about to fail in chemistry, so I consulted with the psychology department, which was the closest thing they had in those days to career counselors. And he told me that what I should aspire to was to being a physical education coach. That made me mad, and the family I was living with did encourage me to get away from natural sciences, because I was aspiring to be a real startler in the world of science. And so I had to back down off of that. And they told me I should be working with people, rather than in science. So I turned into the sociology/political science field and did much better.

But at the same time, I was having a terrific struggle with my religious views. On the one hand, the Catholic nuns in St. Paul were trying to get me into the convent, which I couldn't agree to. And on the other hand, I was beginning to question

PALMQUIST: the hell and brimstone, fire and brimstone, which was being advocated at most of the churches in Minneapolis-St. Paul. At that time, I didn't know about the Unitarian Church. So I went from one church to the other, and I'd leave each church madder than before if they mentioned fire and brimstone. I finally went to the Catholic priest and told him what problems I had, and he gave me a lecture on what I needed was more faith. And that it was fine to question, but faith was much better than questioning. So with that, I left the Catholic Church.

At the university, I became interested in the International Club, which was a student organization of all nationalities. There were students there from India, Japan, various other countries. And I also got my first political affiliation, if you want to call it that, and I do--and that was the League of Women Voters, campus branch. Going back a little on the political, the teacher who encouraged us to have higher education beyond high school, also encouraged us to be active in the community and to take an interest in civic affairs, and that was when I watched an election process, and watched the counting of the votes and so on. Then being active in the university branch of the League of Women Voters, I became interested in watching the legislature perform, women in industry, and the other subjects that the League was delving into at the time. I, of course, developed very pro leanings toward, at that time called "suffragette " projects. In my senior year I had to find a different place, because I was living in a co-op housing on the university campus and that was being closed; so I was looking for somewhere else. And the Dean of Women, she also was taking an interest in me by that time, I think because a Political Science professor at the university had also taken an interest.

And I was working at that time for a professor of law at the Univeristy of Minnesota and living in Minneapolis in the Midway district. So of course, I had to look for a way to earn a living at the same time. And political science in those days did not give you the type of training which would land you a job when you got out. I didn't come from a family background which could give me any encouragement as far as the foreign service was concerned, so I decided to become a social worker. Teaching was out as far as I was concerned, because I had long ago decided that small towns were far too regulatory over the beliefs and actions of their teachers. And one experience that had an impact in this direction was the fact that during the time that we had this liberal school superintendent, lo and behold, our town developed a Ku Klux Klan, and burned a fiery cross and threatened the school superintendent. And he then packed a gun, and went out to a practice with the school janitor, who then attested far and wide as to what an excellent shot the school superintendent was, so he never came to any harm. However, he did continue his interest in us during our school years.

I was followed in the university by my next brother, a year and

PALMQUIST: a half younger, who did quite well in school. And the second brother down the line, whose name was Michael, was quite outstanding as a runner and high jumper and pole vaulter while he was in high school. He was, therefore, selected by the university, and in those days, contractors would hire the promising athletes; so his means of supporting himself in school was assured, because he always earned enough, working for contractors on road jobs or whatever, to earn his way. And of course, being an outstanding athlete--he was Minnesota's miler and two miler--he was initiated into a fraternity.

By that time, I was looking around for another way besides housework, babysitting, and ironing to support myself in school, and doing cooking for wealthy families during the summertime. So I got a job at a settlement house called the "Northeast Settlement House." This was during my last two years in school. I think I got--I forget what I got--some stipend, which did provide me with just barely enough to pay my expenses. But it gave me an all-round experience in a different part of Minneapolis, which was mainly Syrian and Polish. I was their girls' coach and girls' activity person there. One thing that I learned that was outstanding--and this seems funny because it seems like it had no bearing, but it does--and that is, that the little old lady that ran the settlement house loved noise. She was in her heyday if the settlement house was just bursting with all kinds of noise. Because, she said, noise meant that the kids were active and happy. So that carried me back to the days when all the kids would gather in our farm yard, and we'd all play 'til nine o'clock at night when everyone would have to go to bed, because we got up early in the morning in the summertime to work in the fields. And the neighbors would ask my mother how in the world she could stand the din, and she said, "What noise? I didn't hear any noise." Well, I guess there's a moral in that for all of us.

My first job, when I graduated from the university, was a job with the Family Welfare Society. And that was the cream of the jobs in Minneapolis at that time, because they paid five dollars a month more than any of the other agencies. However, I just worked there for a little over a year when I had an opportunity to go to work at maternity hospital for half time at better pay and take up graduate study. I got two-thirds as much working half time at the maternity hospital as their social worker, as I would get staying out at the Family Society. I was influenced at the Family Society because it was headed by Joanna Colcord who came to Minneapolis from the East and was an outstanding social work educator on the East coast. While I was taking graduate work at the univeristy, I also corrected papers for one of the sociology teachers. She was connected on the board of the state Children's Bureau, and when they had a part-time job, they wanted me to do that. So, in addition to my work at maternity hospital, I also worked part-time for the Children's Bureau. And what I did there was to evaluate the case work files of the state's children's

PALMQUIST: caseworkers, and make notes as to what needed to be done to bring the casework file up to a standard.

Now, at that time, the Director of the social work department at maternity hospital got a disability illness, and then I was made the Director. So I went there to work full-time until the emergency relief began to burgeon in the state.

I then went to work for the state in Bemidge, Minnesota as the county casework supervisor. There was a change in administration in that county, and instead of advancing myself as casework supervisor to the county administrator job, they brought in a male relative of the owner of one of the department stores in Minneapolis as the administrator. But he didn't last very long because the President of the state welfare board made a visit and took me out for a ride and asked me how things were going, and of course, I am very disinclined to hold anything back and so I just told her.

At that same time, the state was setting up a transient bureau to handle the tremendous number of transients that were at that time hopping trains, doing all kinds of roaming; and they wanted to organize a system so that these persons wouldn't be forced to steal and commit other crimes in order to exist. And I was asked to assist the Director in the social work area, so I became a social work supervisor of the State Transient Division. As an education program developed for the transient camps, I also became the Education Supervisor and combined that with the social work. I set up offices in Minneapolis and St. Paul and instructed the county welfare workers on the policies and procedures which were established by the Transient Division for the better administration of relief to the transients. At one of the transient camps--this was at the time that the very serious drought took place in the Midwest, and cattle were shipped from Montana to northern Minnesota--which did not suffer from the drought--in order to eat the lush grass that was growing there in the summertime. And we had a cattle transient camp going. We also had a forestry transient camp going. At another transient camp, we were encouraging the men to form cooperative industries or cooperative enterprises whereby they might become self-supporting. With all of this enterprise that we were beginning to formulate to put the transients to work to better themselves, we brought down the wrath of some of the nation's businessmen and they had their influence with Harry Hopkins and President Roosevelt. And they sent an axe man into St. Paul to chop up the transient division; and, of course, the division was liquidated.

I then had to look for another job, and I then went to work for the state of Washington as a district supervisor over ten counties in eastern Washington; I was headquartered in Yakima. Well, by that time I had been married for five years and I had a one year old daughter--not quite a year old--she was about six months old when

PALMQUIST: I went to Washington. In order to work on a travel job I needed a housekeeper, so I went up to my home town and I hired a gal that wanted a housework job. And so she and I got into a car and we traveled across country to Yakima to settle down and begin work there. My husband, who incidentally had been the organizer of the asbestos workers union--oh, I'll get to that in a minute. My husband was then working for Hamms Brewery on a big enlargement they were doing in St. Paul so he didn't want to go, so he remained. And I went to Yakima and found a nice house and settled in.

On the way as we went, we're approaching Billings, Montana, there was a tremendous flood. The cars were stacked up for a mile ahead of the flood because no one dared to go through. Finally, a salesman said that he knew the road well enough and he was going to go through. So he started on through, and I went after him. We got through that alright, although there were other cars that were sunk in the ditches alongside that hadn't made it. We got to the edge of Billings and the bridge was washed out into the town. The only way that we could get in was to go up on a railroad track and then up and over a railroad trestle which hadn't been washed out. The town itself had six inches of water on all the hotel floors. So up over the railroad trestle we went, and bump, bump, bump over the ties to get across. And we stayed in the hotel that night and then went on into Seattle without further incident.

In Minneapolis, at about the same time that I began working for maternity hospital, a group of university students was forming a liberal voters' organization called the Young Voters' Liberal League. So I joined that and became active in the Young Voters' Liberal League. Now this kind of branched off into another one called the Organized Unemployed,and I took some active part in the Organized Unemployed. Now some of the people who were in these two types of organizations--one in particular was a very outstanding university student, and she was at that time President of the Office and Professional Workers Union. At the university I had taken two courses, one in labor history and one in labor economics or something like that, so I decided I wanted to join a labor union. So I went to the gal who was the President of the union and I asked her if I could join. And she said, "I don't know how you can, because the rest of us are all stenographers or secretaries or office help." And I said, "Well, you union says, 'Office and Professional Workers,'" and she said, "Yes, but I'll have to take you name up to the board." So I made my application and they took it up at the board, and my friend the President got me in.

INTERVIEWER: What was her name?

PALMQUIST: Her name was Adelyn Geehen. So from then on, I was active in the Office and Professional Workers Union.... At that time we had our first Farmer Labor governor, and I was active in the Farmer Labor party. I remember that we passed literature and made door-to-door

PALMQUIST: contacts, talking to people about our candidate, who became Governor Bjerstern Olson. And although I was in a mixed neighborhood--possibly quite conservative--I really had a good response from people at the doors. Whether they agreed with me or not, we always had very pleasant conversations. I also made a radio speech for the candidate, and I got the League of Women Voters very mad at me because I mentioned that I was a member of the League of Women Voters. (laughs) Well anyway, I was the fieldworker in the state of Washington, administering all of the social work programs for that area. Each county had a supervisor, and I was to supervise the state's program as administered by these county supervisors and their staffs. We had meetings in Olympia or Seattle every three to six weeks, sometimes with the county commissioners, because the state welfare administrator wanted the backing of the political forces in the community for the social welfare programs, which at that time included unemployment compensation which was just starting up, and the work relief programs.

It was there that I learned community organization, because Charles Ernst, the state administrator, was very good at organizing communities and carrying them along into the programs that were to be administered. But I decided that....well, first, at this time the federal government was fluctuating very much from one policy to another. First they'd have the people go to work and then they'd shut down all the work projects. They went from C.W.A. [Civil Works Administration] to W.P.A. [Works Project Administration]. They'd give them some direct relief, but not enough to live on. Then a work program would start up again, and before it really got going very strong, it would close down. They had a group of women relief workers that operated clothing centers, canning centers, for the community--so everyone would bring in fruits and vegetables and can them and things were really humming. But apparently that policy went by the board, and they closed that down.

About that time, I decided that I'd had it with social work as a means of ameliorating the problems of the human race. I decided there must be a better way, and so I harked back to my union days and I said to myself, "To ease the economic situation was the way to solve the economic problems of the masses of the people, because if they could organize and get better wages and better working conditions which would spread the work around, they wouldn't need all that welfare and relief." And so I headed back to Minneapolis and became active in the Office and Professional Workers, who at that time were looking for a part-time business agent. And I put in a bid for the job and I got it. This was in about the fall of 1937.

Going back to my husband, whose name was Harry Mohn, and who was the business agent of the Asbestos Workers Union at the time that I met him, we lived together for a while and then we decided that we'd make it permanent. We got married in Millbank, South Dakota, with another business agent and a girlfriend that he had, to whom

PALMQUIST: he got married at the same time. Of course I insisted that I would want to work, and I wished to keep my own name. So the mailbox at our apartment said, "Harry Mohn and Rose Seiler." My husband thought nothing about it. If I wanted to work, that was fine, and if I wanted to keep my own name, that was fine. It didn't seem to matter to him. But whether it had a psychological effect is a question, and possibly it did; but probably the greater psychological effect was that I was a stronger, more active person. I had more drive, and I think that was what split us up really in the end.

In Yakima, I tried to get my husband to settle down on a farm, and I agreed that we would go farming in order to get him back on his feet, because he had come out from working at Hamms Brewery after I wrote to him. We'd already been separated more than a year. And I wrote to him and said, "Now or never." He either came out and joined the family, and of couse he adored the little girl. The only part was, he never did anything to support her. He never paid the hospital bill; I paid my own hospital bill. I went to work when she was sixteen days old to keep up the support because that was all the leave I had. And it didn't occur to me to demand any more; as a matter of fact, I think I probably was opposed at that time to receiving any support from a husband or a man under any circumstances. And I know I insulted many of my potential boyfriends by insisting on paying my way when we went out. (laughs) Also, when I married the second time, which I'll get to after a bit....well, anyway, Mr. Mohn and I separated, and we did that at the time when I left Yakima and went back to Minnesota and he stayed in Yakima. In Minnesota, I got a divorce with a very small support request for child support. I think it was five dollars a month. When Mr. Mohn threatened to come back, I threatened him with having to pay his child support and that kept him away. So that ended that episode.

While I was working for the union in Minneapolis, I headquarterd at the Central Labor Council. And that was during the years right after the big Teamster Union strike in Minneapolis, when they changed the town around from an open shop town into becoming a closed shop town. While I was business agent of the Office and Professional Workers Union, I organized most of the newspaper office workers, and I consolidated all of the creameries into an industry contract covering all of their office workers.

Minneapolis Teamsters were undergoing a struggle with their own international union. The Teamsters were led by a socialist group of the Eugene V. Debs style, and they were organizing in the Midwest and were getting a certain amount of support from the man who later became famous--Jimmy Hoffa. Jimmy, in his book, claims that he was the one that organized the Midwest. This is not the truth; the Midwest was organized by Local 544 Teamsters Union of Minneapolis; and the driving force were the socialists,

PALMQUIST: who were for improving society and not out for the personal gain. At that time, the international union wanted a great deal more authority, and the mavericks were the teamsters in Minneapolis. Dan Tobin, the international union President, at that time went to [President] Roosevelt, who was about to go for a second term, and bargained with him for labor support for his candidacy for another term in office. So at that time, at the administration's behest, the Congress adopted an anti-sedition type law called the Smith Act. Now this must have been with some knowledge of a war coming, because this was adopted in 1938. In 1939, ahead of the Teamsters National Convention, seventeen of the Teamsters organizers in Minneapolis were indicted under the Smith Act, and yours truly was indicted as well, because I got my support in organizing by going both to the Central Labor Council and to the Teamsters Union Council for support before I ever bargained with the employer, or in one case, when Consolidated Freightways Office employees pulled a strike because of refusal to grant recognition. So my organizing activities were dependent upon support from the other trade unions; and I sought and got the support, not only from the Central Labor Council which was headed at that time by Roy Weil--and Hubert Humphrey was the mayor of Minneapolis, whom the Farmer-Labor party and the Central Labor Council helped elect.

So anyway, the trial happened during the fall of 1941, which culminated in the Pearl Harbor attack on December 8th of 1941, just ahead of the sentencing of the members who were indicted. The case against me was dismissed for lack of evidence, but I believe mainly because of my record at the University of Minnesota. That's of course, just my interpretation. Maybe that didn't have enough evidence, I don't know. But they don't need evidence on a conspiracy charge. At that time, I was keeping company with Ed Palmquist, one of the Teamster Union organizers, and he was indicted and sentenced.

Of course, there were appeals that went on, and there was tremendous national support activity that was for the defense of what is called the Minneapolis Case in New York, including the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. The liberal element had a separate organization and they collected quite liberally for the defense of the seventeen Teamsters. They did finally serve their jail sentences, some of them at Sandstone Prison in northern Minnesota. A woman, Grace Carlson, because she was a theoretician in labor and radical politics, went to the eastern United States to a women's prison. And Mr. Dunn and Carl Skogland the heads of the Teamsters Union were sent elsewhere. I think it was Leavenworth; I'm not sure. They served their sentences beginning in January of 1944. Those who had a year and a day got out in November of 1944; they started serving their sentences on January 1, 1944 and got out in November of '44. Excepting those who got eighteen months, which were the higher-ups in the Teamsters Union.

PALMQUIST: At that time I was spending my time during this eight months' imprisonment at my mother's farm in Barnum, and I was getting a support allowance from the defense fund. The case is written up in, I believe, two booklets, two paperback editions, called "The Minneapolis Case." Now the Congress and the President are considering abolishing the Smith Act, because it is a pernicious type legislation and it is used to bottle up what are termed as radicals at a time of need. Of course the "need" was that Roosevelt wanted Tobin's membership vote, and the Teamsters were the largest union in the country. The result was that Roosevelt got Tobin's support and Tobin got his international union increase in control, as well as a large boost in salary for the international President out of his end of the deal.

INTERVIEWER: When you first got involved in the union, did you think you would ever have a leadership role? Did you think being a woman made any difference?

PALMQUIST: Oh, getting now back to me; I was still in the Office and Professional Workers' Union. And lo and behold, Bill Green, President of the AF of L--the CIO hadn't joined them then yet--Bill Green sent his international representative to oust Rose Seiler. And, of course, we did put up a fight, which we almost won as far as a vote of the membership was concerned. But he did come in and change the locks on the door, and just boosted me out. I did not go to get any legal defense, and we didn't have the types of legal defense then that we have now--legal assistant activities for persons who were being discriminated against. I don't think I was being discriminated against because I think I was a good organizer. I increased the membership of that union for the AF of L tremendously. And their excuse in ousting me from office was, "too sympathetic with the CIO," which is true. I was sympathetic to the CIO; I am for industrial type organization. But that did not influence my work for the Office and Professional Workers Union. In the fall of 1944, Hubert Humphrey was still in the U.S. Senate, backed by both the Farmer Labor Party and the Democratic Party. In the House, we had Roy Weir, formerly the secretary of the Central Labor Union, and he was a Minnesota representative from that Minneapolis district known as the labor district for many, many years; I believe he was there until his death. Besides myself as an activist, all of the leading women in the Office and Professional Workers' Union were activists. There was also a Hairdressers' Union business agent who was a woman, and a Garment Workers' Union, and this was a Myrtle--I've forgotten her last name. But she was a real active unionist of.... almost of the New York Garment Workers stripe. The other girls or women who were business agents in Minneapolis at that time. We were very active in the Farmer Labor Party.

Now, I have to explain that in Minnesota there was a special deal; the fact that it was called Farmer Labor Party meant just that, because the laboring group of people, through their unions, paid

PALMQUIST: a per capita tax, not always on their whole membership. But paying a per capita tax into the Farmer Labor Party. There were several farm groups. There was the Farmers' Union and another, oh, the Grange. The Grange was more conservative, but the Farmers' Union was about as liberal in context politically as the labor movement was in Minnesota. Northern Minnesota, as you know, is a very liberal end of the state. And it is from there that we have our present vice-president and also our own congressman who would have been a glorious statesman--not just a politician--and that was Nick Begich. At the time of this, this same time in 1944, a Mr. Benson was governor of Minnesota. And he comes from north-central Minnesota, and I believe he had several terms. As a matter of fact, some friends of mine here now still visit him when they go back to visit in Minnesota.

Minnesota, in general, reflects a more left trend than some other parts of the country. We had a working acquaintance with Phil La Follette, whose father was the famous senator from Wisconsin. We were active as unionists in the Farmer Labor Party. By this time the Young Voters' Liberal League had been disbanded, because Governor Olson had provided for the majority of the leadership and put them into state jobs; and that seemed to dissolve the organization. And there's probably a moral in that, too. I was also active in the co-op movement. There is a co-op health group in Minnesota, which is still going strong. My home town had a farmers' co-op, which was a very successful venture and why it went downhill I don't know. There was a grocery buying cooperative in Minneapolis and at times they'd have a store. I was interested in all of the co-op movement and knew the leadership in Minnesota quite well. I formed the opinion that whenever federal funds go into a cooperative, it is a sure sign of coming death. A cooperative has to be managed by its members.

And that leads me to another firm conclusion that I have. And that is that government should always be by the many, and not by the few. I'm a firm believer in a grass roots kind of democracy. I believe in unions being run by their members, and not by their internationals. I believe in politicans accounting for their political acts to their constiuencies. I believe that the voters, and everyone should be a voter who is eligible to vote, should be informed, and it is my opinion that our present media system is not conducive to producing a group of informed voters. Not as informed as people that I have run into of European descent. I remember when I was a social worker, I had visited an Italian family who made their own beer, and I said nothing about it. Wonderful gardeners, but they knew the politics of the country and they could talk politics. Go to any poor Caucasian, and you aren't as apt to find interest in, or a knowledge about the political situation. So, to me, it is extrememly important that people be informed. I don't think that they need to be led; if they're informed, they'll make the best decisions.

PALMQUIST: So Mr. Palmquist got out of jail, and we went out to Las Vegas where he could get a quick divorce and we could get married. He went to work in a construction plant; the aluminum plant was just undergoing construction; he went to work there. And Carl Skogland, the decapitated President of Local 544 in Minneapolis, went to work at the same place. I went to work as a bookkeeper for the Carpenters' Union in Las Vegas; we got there in December and we left in April. The divorce took place and a marriage took place.

From there, we went to Medford, Oregon, where Camp White was being constructed. You can see that by now we were following war construction. Mr. Palmquist went to work as a laborer in Camp White, and before too many months went by the first son of that marriage--the first child of that marriage--was born. His name is Michael. He is presently a small-time business man in Wasilla [Alaska] doing very well for himself. In his training days, he was a member of Local 302, Operating Engineers. As a result, he bought that kind of equipment--meaning earth-moving equipment--and that's the business that he is in.

Mr. Palmquist was an uneasy-type person as far as settling down was concerned. He was easy to get along with, a fairly good husband; no complaints about the relationship as far as congeniality went. He'd get restless and he'd want to move on to another spot. Maybe things weren't as interesting, or he didn't have the status that he had when he was a Teamster organizer in Minneapolis. I don't know. Wherever we went we got acquainted with the local liberal political situation, and became involved.

From Seattle, we went to San Francisco, where Mr. Palmquist became a hod carrier. From there, we went back to Minnesota for him to serve his jail sentence. When we got out of there, we went back to Seattle, where we both worked in the shipyards. I became an apprentice in the Electricians' Union, and when the management found out that I had college studies, they wanted me to become a timekeeper; and they said, "You can wear a white hat and a white jacket and go all around, and you won't have to work hard." I said, "What does it pay?" They said, "It pays eighty-three cents an hour." And I said, "Well, on day shift, I get ninety-five cents as an apprentice or a laborer, so why should I let my college education stand in the way? I'll stay on as a laborer." I eventually switched to the night shift which paid one dollar and fifteen cents per hour. Incidentally, at this same time, Minneapolis in war work was paying fifty cents an hour. But in Minneapolis, women were hired at a lesser pay than men. But this was not true in Seattle in the shipyards. And the shipyards paid better than Noeing. When the war ended, the shipyards closed down, and we were unemployed. We were in the process of building a house on Beacon Hill, but we decided to go to Alaska after my brother came down from his mining activities and working as a carpenter in Alaska; he'd been up here since '34. And he said that

PALMQUIST: there was always work in Alaska.

So, we rented out our house and bundled up, and came up to Alaska. After piddling around for a while, I went to work for the Alaska railroad in 1949. That fall, they tried to lay us off, I had gone to work as Rose Seiler; I had not taken on the married name of Palmquist. Mr. Palmquist also didn't care whether I used my maiden name or not. He did care that I worked; he wanted me to work. (laughs) So, anyway, we joined the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 183, and the railroad promptly laid us off. So we went to the secretary and president, who were--John Shaw was the main dispatcher at the railroad and also President of the American Federation of Government Employees. He was the vice-president of clerks, and Bill Cannon was the President of AFGE, and he was a boilermaker over in the shops. So those people defended this group of ten women that the railroad had hired for the first time as clerk-checkers. And we were the checkers. They had men as the truckers. So, by fighting the battle, we were hired back with the next spring work. However, I went to work in the auditing department, and from there, I went over to stores accounting. By that time, John Shaw had given up the vice-presidency of clerks and I took it on. So I took over John Shaw's position as representative of the clerks on the Alaska railroad. Eventually, I became the chairman of the negotiating committee and the chairman of the grievance committee. And as such, I did the grieving for all non-ops.

The difference between ops and non-ops is that the four big railroad brotherhoods are the ops; everyone else is a non-op. That included the boilermakers, who had their own union, although they were also in AFGE, and the machinists who had their own representative, who at that time was Mandville Olsen, who is now a homesteader or a farmer up at Wasilla. We were on the negotiating committee and we'd have problems with the management; and every time that I thought that we were being unfairly treated, I would direct correspondence to Washington D.C. Then a representative for territories would come out and get in on the side of management and try to overwhelm us with his ability to manage a computer and his ability with words--the fact that he was articulate.

INTERVIEWER: Who was that?

PALMQUIST: I don't remember his name. I think he wrote a book, too. But anyway, I used the expertise that I had developed in Minneapolis in the movement with the socialist-type attitude toward representatives of the employer or the bosses. And I would belittle him for being the tool. And later on, after I'd left the railroad and he had left the government employment, he visited here and asked about me, you know. So I don't know if he had good feelings or not, but I didn't have very good feelings about him, because he

PALMQUIST: was doing a bad turn. In 1953, the railroad fired me for being a subversive. I went to Harold Butcher, who at that time was involved with Ray Murdock of Washington, D.C. in collecting back pay for the railroaders. Because, when the unions got the forty hour week for the federal workers for the Alaska Railroad in 1949, they owed a great deal of back pay on overtime work. And the railroaders were all putting in their claims for their overtime work, and Harold Butcher was the representative of those employees, working with Ray Murdock in Washington, D.C. So, Harold Butcher was very sympathetic and carried on my case for several years, and then he dropped it as hopeless.

In 1954, I was called before a Civil Service personnel board in Seattle. I don't remember the outcome of that, but I did ask for a hearing in Washington before the Civil Service Commission, and I got it. And I asked Ray Murdock to defend me, which he did at no cost. But first he asked me if I was a member of the Communist Party. So he asked me was I a member of the Trotskyist group. And I said no; I attended many of their meetings but I was not a member. So anyway, nothing happened then for a long time; no decision seemed to be made. So finally, when Eisenhower was in, he had Fred something-or-other as his Secretary of Interior. And just then, an exact case had been won in a Circuit Court of Appeals on the East coast. So I wrote to Fred Eton, and I said, "I am now a homesteader, raising my two remaining children in my home and giving them an education. I want them to have a college education if I can afford it. And you know, you would lose the case if I took it to court, so why put me to that expense?" This was six years later; this was in 1959. And the Secretary of Interior decided that my cause was just and he reinstated me with the Alaska Railroad with full back pay--all six years. And I laughed and laughed and laughed, because I had undergone the privations of homesteading at the railroad expense. (laughs) In 1954, after I'd been to Washington, D.C., I filed on a homestead, which was then the end of the road out of Wasilla heading toward Willow. And in 1955, right after school let out, a neighbor took us up in a panel truck; we had already purchased a small trailer, which was excess at the Alaska native service hospital, which they'd used for nursing quarters. And took it up and had a patch cut out of the trees, and plunked the trailer in there and the two kids and I and a couple of cats settled down. (laughs)

In the meantime, going back a little, going into the family situation. In Seattle, my daughter Kelly was born in 1945, during an interval of not working at the shipyards. After we came up to Alaska, which was when she was twenty months old, Mr. Palmquist and I built small houses for sale, and I was the building laborer and he was the carpenter. He went to work for J.B. Warwick and Company as a carpenter, although he first had to pass the Carpenters Union exam, which he did. J.B. Warwick

PALMQUIST: was building at that time Chugach School. When the job was finished and the crew was laid off, he went to the superintendent of schools and said, with the various schools that they had, didn't they need a maintenance man to do the little jobs like patching up the doors, the broken windows, the electric lights, when the plumbing didn't work and so on; and they hired him. And here comes another experience in the labor movement. And that is--this may not be just the labor people--but any person who is ever considered a threat to the establishment is hounded by the F.B.I. And every time Mr. Palmquist got a job, they would go to the employer and get him fired. And that happened not only at the school district, it happened first at the Alaska Railroad, then at the school district; and later on, he went to work for Ben Bogey for the city as an assistant assessor to Merrill Chitty. And the F.B.I. couldn't hurt him there, but he eventually left that job of his own free will.

INTERVIEWER: Did the F.B.I. follow you?

PALMQUIST: Oh, I'm sure they did. I'm sure that the F.B.I. was on my trail from the very time that I began attending any of the Socialist Workers' Party meetings. Because they had a membership both within the Communist Party and its opposition, the Socialist Workers' Party....and also had membership within the Minneapolis union. But for some reason or another, I never noticed it as much, although the F.B.I. would visit our neighbors and our friends and tell them not to tell us that they had visited them. Some of them did, of course, but most of them did not. And they were asked, did we ever solicit them to join a radical party, you know, a subversive party like the Communist Party or whatever I personally believe that any party should have a right to exist, and if they can convince people that they have something to offer, if anyone else thinks it's wrong, it's up to them to convince them that they have something better to offer. I think that there should be free speech, although I don't believe in a policy being directed by a foreign government. But....

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any objection from McCarthy?

PALMQUIST: Oh, well Joe McCarthy was the reason, really, that I got fired. Yes, because Joe McCarthy at that time made the big charge that there were subversives in government, and that gave the railroad the nerve--the backing--to get by with it. Oh yes, Joe McCarthy was the cause. And when I was in Washington that time in 1954, I saw both Roy Weir and Hubert Humphrey. Roy Weir was very helpful. Delegate Bartlett was extremely helpful--Bob Bartlett. He opened up his office. He had his staff make appointments with various people that I wanted to see. And it was of no political advantage to Bob Bartlett, because I wasn't that well known in the state at the time. But he remembered that I had had a dinner of Railroaders for Bob Bartlett.

INTERVIEWER: When he was running for office?

PALMQUIST: When he was running for office. (laughs) Anyway, he treated me very well, and I thought simply because he thought that I was being badly used. So, anyway, I would say that he was really a great representative and he--his memory is a fine memory in the state.

OK, where are we at? Oh, Mr. Palmquist . . . well anyway, my brother then went into mining chromite across from Homer and out of Soldovia, at Red Mountain, And it was called Keni Chrome Company. First he asked us--well, the details don't matter--but after some various negotiations; he had already worked on this project for two years, and had it pretty well lined out for a federal loan to mine strategic metals, since chromium is a strategic metal. He took old Mr. Bachner--George Bachner--into partnership with him. Bachner had forty -nine percent and my brother had fifty-one percent, and he opened up the mine; and it was one of the few ventures that paid off his loan to the government which was about three hundred and thirty thousand dollars. He paid it off the fastest of any borrowers in the state, which the tin mine was a failure.

Well, Mr. Palmquist went to work for my brother, Mike Seiler, and he worked there for a couple of years. And then he decided that he would quit working. Well, in the meantime we had built and accumulated six rental units of property. And our joint working was making the payments; the rents would make the payments and our joint working would help to improve the property, pay up ahead, and help improve the family living. Well he decided that he would just come up and live off of the income. But there wasn't that much income. So anyway, I decided to go homesteading at the time; this was in 1954. And he didn't want to go homesteading. So we separated mainly over that but also, because he decided not to work. He eventually remarried and went down to Las Vegas. And I tried a short marriage to a retired Alaska Railroad engineer, but our interests were not sufficiently compatible to continue. So that ended that. His name was Jim Duley.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you take the name Palmquist?

PALMQUIST: Oh, when my youngsters went to school I found it was quite a problem to have them as Palmquists and me as Seiler. And we were fairly new here; see, my son was five when we got up here and he went to school that fall. So I said, "Well, we're new up here and Seiler hasn't one iota of meaning up here, so I'll take the name of Palmquist." That's how I became Palmquist. Going back to 1954, when Mr. Palmquist and I separated, my oldest daughter married a man from the military who was from Waterbury, Connecticut. And he was the only child of parents, a doting aunt, and a grandmother. And it was decided amongst

PALMQUIST: us that it would be terrible to take the only son away from that doting family on the East coast in order for them to make a living for themselves here in Anchorage. So they bundled up and went east and have lived there ever since. They've raised three children, the two eldest of which are now in Alaska. One works at Providence Hospital, and other one--Dean Beaulieu--is following in the footsteps of Michael at earth-moving business and trucking gravel.

INTERVIEWER: How did your political views change over the years?

PALMQUIST: Oh, from the, almost from the first, when we came to Anchorage, I became active in the Democratic Party. At that time the McCutcheons were very much in the leadership, as was Ken Johnson, Harold Butcher, John Shea. And I believe that I was on the by-laws committee with John Shea when they were revising the by-laws of the local Democratic club. There was a kind of a small rift in the local Democratic Party here when Wendall Kaye showed up on the scene; he was working in the law firm with the McCutcheons. And they decided that they would exert a greater leadership in the party. Of course, as you know, this was second generation McCutcheon leadership, because both Steve McCutcheon and Stan McCutcheon were the sons of the father who had been in the legislature, and who had introduced the bill which established the Pioneer Homes. So, but both Wendell Kaye and Stan McCutcheon were very able political strategists and organizers. And they did emerge as leaders of the party. What followed shortly thereafter was that they devised a party slate and that is when Anchorage, and the only time, that Anchorage ever elected a total slate of Democrats to the House.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk about your experience as a woman in the political arena? Are women given an equal voice in decision-making?

PALMQUIST: My experience as to the place that women make for themselves in the political arena is that they have not yet reached a state of equality. A woman has to be superior in leadership and political strategy and talents in order to get to the top as compared to her male workers. For the most party, women still do the chores of political campaigns rather than the strategy. True, they have a part in strategy, but women still do not have a fifty-fifty chance of making decisions or reaching positions of power in the party and I'm sure this is true in the Republican Party as well. This is proven by the fact of the composition of our present or any of the past legislatures. We lost women in this last legislature due to, I don't think a reaction in politics against women but possibly the campaigns weren't as well conducted. And there was a different political tempo in this last election as compared to previous elections. The Party was probably more fragmented than before.

In any event, there is a need for women to have more voice and the only way they're really going to do it is to take it. And

PALMQUIST: the reason, one good reason women don't have the voice is that they still are timid. They lack confidence in themselves. They will not push themselves to the forefront. And another reason . . . and the same psychology and it's a terrible situation from my point of view and that is that women in industry and in the work force now are getting comparatively less in pay as compared to the men than they did sometime back. I think this is a blotch on all of those who have anything to say with our economic and our political structure because it shows while we are getting more media coverage we are not really gaining.

In 1955, when I went homesteading at then, the end of the road out of Wasilla and before you cross the railroad tracks at mile 173, the first thing that we did was, of course, to cut up all of the trees that were down and in a circle around us into firewood. And the next thing that we did is, we got a house mover to move a small cabin from our home sight at Rabbit Creek up and we attached it to the trailer, small trailer on the homestead. The reason that we had decided to homestead was because when the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] opened up the tract, section 33, out at Rabbit Creek for homesite, allowing everyone two and a half acres, I convinced the whole lot of the railroaders to file and I filed on a homesite. At that time, I was the bread winner in the family. And we built a small twelve by sixteen cabin out there and we proved up on our homesite.

Well, when the kids and I were left alone we said, "Well, we don't have to do quite as much to homestead excepting we have to clear ten acres if we live on it for fourteen months straight." So we had a vote and we decided to go homesteading. Besides that, my boy had gotten into a little neighborhood strife with Susan Sullivan, I mean Susan Meekins who later became our Representative Susan Sullivan, because he had a BB gun and she was tromping his mother's strawberries and he let go with the BB gun and hit her right in a certain spot in her lower back. (Laughs) And Papa Meekins came stormin' over and that was another thing--we decided that we would live a life free of such problems with close neighbors and also we could yell at each other and have lots of the freedoms that you have out in open spaces that you don't have in a congested city.

We only had, since Mr. Palmquist and I had split the property and the debts, I only had what the bank didn't take from a duplex at 1526 Case Street, plus what I could pick up locally. So I served on election boards and I did a small amount of substitute teaching and in '59, when we first had statehood and before I got my big check from the U.S. government, from the Alaska Railroad, rather, I served as a legislative consultant for the MEA for four months.

INTERVIEWER: What is MEA?

PALMQUIST: MEA, Matanuska Electric Association, a cooperative REA supported utility. And then of course, we raised crops for sale and I tried various aspects of making a living farming and decided that if you couldn't do it in a big way, you couldn't make money at it. So then when I got the bonus check from the Alaska Railroad I went back to work at the Railroad and worked there until '61, until computerization abolished my job, at which time I retired without any retirement pay. But I did have the funds from six years of back pay in order to make life a little bit easier. In the summer of '62, my brother was closing down his chromium mining operation and his cook had left and he needed a cook for the summer so I cooked for him for about six or seven weeks and got about two truckload of groceries which was a big help in lieu of wages.

We did very well at living off the land. We picked a lot of the wild berries; we raised large gardens; we sold berries and we sold rhubarb; and we sold lettuce and cabbages to the co-op. My daughter was in 4-H so we had her projects: goats, chickens, cows, (laughing) horses, and then when she went to college, mama had all the work.

INTERVIEWER: You must have had a lot of work all along, if there were just three of you.

PALMQUIST: Yeah, well, that's right; there was Michael, Kelly and myself. When we homesteaded, Michael was thirteen and Kelly was nine and a half. Homesteading is very hard work but it has lots of compensations too. In those days it was mainly the women that really did the homesteading in that part of our location. The men would work in town and so the organizer, I was the one that kept track of the welfare of all the widows, the grass widows, while their husbands worked at the base or at Anchorage. And we'd installed some field phones so we'd keep better track of each other; because in addition to raising our own crops, we also had to keep predators off. And the predators were the hunters from Anchorage who wanted to hunt for their moose on our homesteads. So we had a system of alerting each other and several times we would come upon a hunter who had shot a moose on our property and we would encourage him to split half of it with us.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder how you did that?

PALMQUIST: We usually did it by finding him when he was cleaning out the moose and we stood there having come up quietly with our rifles in our hands. (laughs) Another time I had a big argument with the Alaska Road Commission. They decided that they would take three hundred feet instead of their one hundred feet because at that time they were planning to build the highway to Fairbanks. And we didn't want to relinquish our land without compensation. The road people said that because we homesteaded after 1947 and

PALMQUIST: before 1956, they did not have to pay us for our land. And all they had to pay us for our improvements. Well, this ended in a long legal battle but, in the meantime, the state sent out their surveyors. And they were going to proceed with their project.

So I went out and I talked with the surveyor. First I talked with one group and I said to them, until the state has purchased and settled this issue they cannot set foot on my property and they would leave. And finally they sent in a very courageous soul--as I recall his name was Mr. Smith--with a survey crew and they were going to survey and they were going to put up monuments across my land. And I went out there and I told them that I had been to see a lawyer and that he had advised me that I would need to use any and all means, whichever was necessary, to keep my property until the case was settled. And the fellow said, "Well we're out here and we're going to put the stakes on." And I said, "No, you are not." And he said, "Oh, yes I am," in a very stern and commanding voice, and I said, "I have a rifle that says you won't." (laughs) And he says, "Well, in that case, I'll put down in my report that you threatened me with a rifle." And I said, "Well, if you're going to put it in your report have it be accurate. I did not threaten with the rifle, I threaten you with the potential use of it." And so that was that and they did leave and they did not come back until after the case was settled. Which they did decide only to buy the improvements.

Later the legislature passed a law because we organized all the homesteaders around there to fight this situation and the legislature then passed a law that said that from then on the state would have to buy any land regardless of when it was homesteaded. Of course, it wasn't retroactive and so, all I got was, I was operating a little, single gas pump and a little oil that I had by that time improved my homestead and moved the trailer over and that was now my gas station, and I was in business. So they were buying the improvements and I got eight-hundred dollars which didn't pay for the improvements, but that's the way it is when you go through legal recourse.

In 1971, I decided to sell a part of the homestead because Mr. Duley and I had split up and I needed either to get a job or to sell some land and I decided that maybe I should sell some land. So, I sold off the front forty acres, which has the house and the barn and a little cow milking shed and a garage. Well, that meant that I had to locate somewhere else, so I bought some property in Wasilla. That took care of 1971, and I managed to live off the down payment that I got on the forty acres I sold off the front of my homestead. Later on I sold the other eighty acres and I kept forty which I later deeded to my daughter. In 1972, Jeff Barry asked me to work for a voters drive on a temporary basis, which I did. I worked there from January into the middle of July for DRIVE, that is the political arm of the Teamsters Local 959. And we were getting, attempting

PALMQUIST: to get Teamsters activated into the Democratic Party. I then decided that I would throw my hat in and run for the legislature Election in District 7, now District 6. At that time the reapportionment had included Eagle River, which made it kind of difficult but it was thought that I might have a chance since I was a long time homesteader and there were a lot of working-class people living in Eagle River and Chugiak.. The only unfortunate thing was that there were four other candidates on that primary and since I only began the campaigning from the middle of July, and I had about five weeks to campaign, I was really not giving myself a very good opportunity of coming out the winner. And then, a group known as the ad hoc group entered a candidate from my own home town of Wasilla and he was the refuse carrier so he knew everybody very well with whom he did business.

So anyway, we split the Wasilla vote and in the end Al Ose of Palmer was the nominee and got elected. And I had told Al that if I won I would expect that he would support me and if he won I would support him. And he won and I did support him. And I supported him for his reelection. Incidently, I was also very active in organizing the political meetings in that area for Governor Bill Egan, former Governor Bill Egan, for then Senator Gruening, for Nick Begich and for Jolmar Kerttula. I remained active in the Democratic Party. I have recently participated in restructuring the Democratic Party on more power to the grass roots and especially to the House districts. Our district, which was previously organized as one precinct, is now organized as a House district. Since I've always been interested in government it follows of necessity that I am interested in politics. Since I'm interested in the economic well-being of the human race it follows that I am interested in the well-being of all of those discriminated against which are the minority races, the minority religions and the large minority of females.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any particular group for whom you're working presently? That is a group which you feel is being discriminated against, are you working for any single group?

PALMQUIST: Well, I'm now seventy-two years old so now I'm working for a new interest group, a group that has been long neglected and since the advent of urbanization and the moving of people off the farms where everybody had a job, the elderly no longer have been, no longer have the opportunity to lead the useful lives that the elderly once did in this country. And we want to get us back to the situation where there is a job for everyone that wants to work at pay which is commensurate with a decent living and with the expertise that's required for the job. And this goes for minorities, for women, and for elderly. I believe that as we elderly become a larger and larger percentage of the United States population, more and more of us will have to remain in

PALMQUIST: production and in order to be productive we will have to work longer. I say we don't have to work in fields that are hum-drum and that maybe we've earned a pension during, but we do need to do something and change is a very good thing to do.

So when I lost the legislative race, another gal that ran against Kertulla, namely Roxann North, wrote to the governor and said she had just the name for an appointment for him for the new program, the Longevity Bonus. And she mentioned me and then mailed me a copy of her letter, which was an amazement to me and I called her up and said, "How did you happen to do that?" And she said, "Well, I think you'd be very good at it." So, I wrote to the governor and said that yes, I was interested in the job. And among six applicants, apparently, I had the best qualifications and I did convince the assistant to Joe Henry, then Commissioner of Administration that program. They decided that that would be a good idea and I was appointed to be the administrator of the Longevity Bonus Program at its inception. And I am proud of the fact that I did over, well over four thousand applications within a six week time while at the same time setting up the administrative procedures, attempting to work out some rules and regulations, work with a brand new office staff including the gal who set up the connection with the computer section which had to have constant deliberation and constant consultation.

INTERVIEWER: Would you explain the Longevity Bonus Program?

PALMQUIST: The Longevity Bonus Program is one of the other things unique to Alaska besides the Pioneer Homes. Longevity Bonus was a residental law for the express purpose of reversing the trend for those people who have worked for many, many years in Alaska and then retire to some other part of the United States because of the high cost of living in Alaska. So they decided that they would provide a bonus in order to encourage people to remain in the state whereby the state would gain by having the expertise and knowledge within the state instead of losing it to other areas of the United States. And so they [the legislation] passed this bill of granting one hundred dollars per month to every Alaskan who applied that had lived in Alaska twenty-five years continuously and intended to remain. And so the first month that the bonus checks went out we had three thousand six hundred and forty-one that had been approved for the bonus. And before I left the office two years later, we had about fifty-four hundred people in the state who were getting the bonus. Two years later this was increased to one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month and no doubt when oil flows it will possibly be increased again because this will be the only opportunity for the elderly to get some benefit from the huge oil benefits which the younger generation will reap many benefits from in the future.

The other benefit, then, that is unique to Alaska is the Pioneer Homes which I mentioned that the father of Steve and Stan Mac-

PALMQUIST: Cutcheon introduced in the legislature way back in, I think, early twenties or thereabouts. That is the Pioneer Home System, which you might think is like a nursing home or a congregate living home but it isn't any one of those. It is like a guest house that the state provides for its elderly who no longer can maintain their own homes either through physical disability or financial problems, isolation or just the need for companionship. Recently, the state also passed a bill which exempted pensions besides military and teacher's pensions from state income tax.

After I had worked in Juneau for two years as the administrator and became acquainted with all of the legislators and most of the state's higher up administrators, a newly formed union organization that was to represent the crafts and trades of the state employees needed a representative, a business representative, in Juneau. And since I was there and since I was well acquainted with those with whom we would need to deal, and since I had a labor background, I was offered that position, which I took.

That organization was based in a triumvirate. The Operating Engineers [union] were one-third. The Laborers picked up the salary on one, the Operating Engineers picked up the salary on one and the Teamsters picked up the salary on one and you guessed who the Teamsters picked up. So, when the trio broke up and the tri-trades union emerged as Local 71, the Teamsters decided that it was high time that they followed the lead of the international and the Western Conference of Teamsters and have their own retiree coordinator. And so I am now working--for as long as I like they say--as the coordinator of Teamster [union] retiree activities.

In that connection, I operate under an extremely liberal policy of Local 959 and that is, one of community service. They allow me to spend a large portion of my time as the chairman of the Municipal Commission for Senior Citizens and another goodly portion of my time with the Older Persons Action Group, which is an offshoot of the original Greater Anchorage Area Action Agency.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any one experience or any experiences that influenced your life or influenced you as far as your work is concerned?

PALMQUIST: It just occurred to me that in my early background that there might have been an experience that caused me to be a little more forceful than the average woman and that was that, in our family of five children whenever my mother went into town to shop and to sell her produce, which included the eggs and cream and often times her cottage cheese, sweet creams, dress chickens, garden vegetables and so on, she'd be gone quite a while, and she'd leave me in charge of the household and to see that everything stayed shipshape and not my older brother because he was expected to more or less work by himself and I was the one to boss the kids around, which I did. I think possibly with a heavy

PALMQUIST: voice or a heavy hand or something because I can remember that. And I also became the monitor of the family as to cleanliness and language. I was the wood carrier and the water carrier and we had to carry it for quite a ways and I always made those boys take baths and wash up although they protested loudly, but my mother always backed me up and I would inspect them before they went to school in the morning.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like a lot of the men that you dealt with . . . do you think it was difficult for those men to deal with you as a really strong woman?

PALMQUIST: Well, let me say also, that since I grew up with three brothers and one sister, my sister was the youngest and a little bit less hardy than the rest of us so we always favored to her, we deferred to her. But, with my brothers, it was deal and deal alike. If they rode a horse, I rode a horse. If they ran down to the gate in the race, I ran down to the gate in the race. If they, and there were several things. If they refused to chop off a chicken's head, though I hated to do it equally well, I would go out and chop off the chicken's head. And, if we forgot to, or used too much water and we had to go out on a moonlight night when the wolves were howling in the woods and we had to go down behind the barn to get some water and they were afraid to do it, I was equally scared, but I would go out and do it. (laughs) I don't know, those might all be indications of a strong determination or something, you know.

INTERVIEWER: But how about, like the husbands that you dealt with . . .?

PALMQUIST: Well, maybe I married, maybe the men that married me were looking for a strong woman and apparently I think I accepted the men that pursued me and maybe being a strong person myself I probably didn't attract a strong man, so I married men that let me have my, gave me my reins pretty well, and you know . . . or I took 'em, I think maybe I took 'em. (laughs) I think I've always had the bit in my mouth.

INTERVIEWER: They could accompany you wherever you went. (laughs)

PALMQUIST: Well, we had an even exchange; the man always had the decisions on the details and I had the decisions on the big ones. (laughs) Well, it worked. I've lived essentially a productive and happy life, I think I could have done more. If I had been a man, I would have been, I would have easily been a administrator of a state department.

INTERVIEWER: In what division?

PALMQUIST: Like in welfare rights, because with the same type of background and I am an executive organizer type, a man would have gone places with it. And I just didn't have the right combination because

PALMQUIST: I'm also a rebel. And rebels and executive ability don't go well together.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it had to do with your being a woman, too?

PALMQUIST: Oh yes, sure it had to do with being a woman.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you would have gone further in union activity, too?

PALMQUIST: Well, yes, I think so. Although as far as the opportunities in many actions, that was a political situation and I don't think it had to do with whether you were a man or a woman but it'd be very difficult for a woman to be the president or a head of a central labor council as yet.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that is?

PALMQUIST: Well, for one thing, there aren't as many women that are business agents, which are the stepping stones to being higher-ups. And the other thing is that it's, the people that are in unions, in Alaska, are more men than women. And I suppose in the United States, there are more men than women--that's why I like this new type of thinking and that is women in labor. Because I think a certain amount of unification of the women that are already in unions would be very helpful in improving the status of women in the labor movement. Because women can be extremely militant as for instance the garment workers, and as for instance, the assistance that women gave during the Revolutionary War although it was still in a subservient, supplementing type of way.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever been refused a job or a promotion because you weren't friendly enough to male boss?

PALMQUIST: Now, what happened behind the scenes I don't know. However, when I was working in the state of Washington, the administrator of the department attempted to get personal in a discussion after he had called me into his hotel room to discuss social work problems. And naturally I repulsed him, since I, although I respected him greatly as an administrator as to his competence, I certainly had no desire to be personally involved. As a matter of fact, in all of my relationships with either men or women, I believe that my attitude was very impersonal, like in the sense of being impersonal. It made no difference to me if I was working with men or with women. I believe that my discussions and efforts to persuade persons to join the union or to adhere to a certain policy or to support certain tactical procedures that I just, you might say, argued from the hip. And I either persuaded them with the logistics of the situation or the facts leading up to what was desired or I didn't. And if I didn't, I would try some other tact. But, my approach has always been straight forward, never devious, and I either convince them or I didn't convince them from the requirements of the situation.

PALMQUIST: I did notice that promotions went to the males regardless of whether I was involved in the promotion or not, so it wasn't a personal matter to me as to whether a man was promoted ahead of me. But in office situations--and I've noticed that also with my friends the teachers, that competence was not the sole factor in decisions involving promotions. A male had a far better chance, both in teaching and in social work, to become an administrator or to get a promotion than a female. I believe that this is probably true also in assembly line work although my experience in assembly lines is very limited.

There was a question as to whether, when I first got involved in the union, whether I thought I would ever have a leadership role. I think my background was such that I never questioned that for one moment. It never occurred to me that I would not. Nor did I think being a woman had any difference. I always went into the situation thinking that good work and competence would be the deciding factor and not sex. When sex did enter into a situation it was always a great surprise to me and also demeaning.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever discouraged from running for a union office?

PALMQUIST: No, and that's in any sense of the use of the word "discouraged," whether I was personally discouraged or whether I was discouraged by others, the answer is still no. In Minneapolis I didn't do much travelling outside of the city in my union work. Possibly only in connection with the fact that the union was directly related to the Farmer Labor Party and so I was almost always a delegate to the state conventions of the Farmer Labor Party, as a representative from the Office and Professional Workers Union. If we did go to such a convention or to a labor convention, which I also attended, which was not always in Minneapolis, we usually travelled in groups.

INTERVIEWER: Was travelling with men a problem?

PALMQUIST: That I never did in the union as such, excepting in groups. However, when I was working for the state of Minnesota I did travel throughout the state with my immediate superior who was the administrator of the transient division. There was no problem, and I believe if you expect that there will be no problem, you are apt not to have a problem. That doesn't work universally, but, as I say, as a general rule.

INTERVIEWER: Was your personal life ever criticized?

PALMQUIST: Not from the standpoint of mixing among the sexes on the job. If my personal life was ever criticized it might have been my own personal lifestyle, whom I married, who I lived with.

INTERVIEWER: Thinking back to the women in the local who were active and then

INTERVIEWER: dropped out--why were you continually active?

PALMQUIST: I imagine that's for the same reason that I was a lifetime activist and not all women are. The way that our union was structured it was a very democratically run union. The informal lines of power that differed from the formal positions was the same as in any organization. There is always a grouping that lays plans a-head and I was not left out of that. I was part of the caucus-ing. Whether it was over beers or whatever....in those days of course, you could get a beer for ten cents or five cents, so that was no problem. Nominations were from the floor. All a person had to do was to get a friend to nominate one and the question of election was entirely dependent upon the membership's idea of effectiveness. Elections were by secret ballot and there was very little actual campaigning for the most part al-though when it came to the union organizing, the position of union organizer or business representative, that was mainly dependent on when a person was in office, on how effectively they had handled the position. The only time that a decision was made that was not democratic was when the international president, [AFL-CIO] Bill Green, moved into Minneapolis to make the ouster of the business agent.

INTERVIEWER: When were you the most active in the union; during which periods of your life?

PALMQUIST: I would say at two different times: one at Minneapolis in the thirties when there was a great deal of activity among the employed and unemployed and more heavily among the unemployed. This was a period of active union organization in Minneapolis and the general period of time in which Minneapolis changed from a nonunion or open shop town into a union town or closed shop town essentially. The other time was when I was the representative of the non-ops for the Alaska Railroad in the fifties. And when we were trying to expand the membership of the American Federation of Government Employees into the Alaska Road Commission. I'm sure that in those periods of time we worked at least sixteen hour days consistently. So that you would have to gather from that that I was active not only in the union interest but also in a number of nonunion interests.

INTERVIEWER: You were talking about some of the decision-making that was made over beer and that kind of thing. Did you ever feel that the comraderie that men had together or the ability to be vulgar at times or that kind of way of relating with friends, especially men who come from a manual labor background or even, you know, just men in general, that your being there was inhibiting or that they didn't include you or you were left out some way because they didn't feel--they weren't comfortable with you as a woman?

PALMQUIST: Of course, I grew to maturity and worked mainly in an atmosphere

PALMQUIST: of male deference to women in the manner of socializing. In a mixed group conversation was discreet, if you want to put it that way. I myself was raised in a very circumspect-type house. Therefore, I have never been very comfortable with, if you want to use the word vulgar, I was never comfortable, not now comfortable, with the use of vulgarity. It violates my own sense of personal dignity and my own right to my own type of privacy and this privacy addresses itself also to the use of the English language and slang.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they were inhibited by having you around?

PALMQUIST: I don't believe so because we had two types of open houses in Minneapolis. I had one on Sundays and a university graduate student had one on Saturday nights and those, of course, were in the depressions, so whatever was served was very low-cost. At that time I was already married and the conversations were mainly about the social problems or the events that centered around the attempts to solve the social problems, but it included the arts to the extent that there was an unemployed art group which put on theatrical events and we were active in that also, although I did not participate other than as a participant on getting audiences there, helping with raising finances and things of that sort, not directly related to the performing arts but rather the making the scenes adequate for the staging of it. And at that time you could get large theatres for free use.

INTERVIEWER: The other thing I am interested in right now: what was the period you mentioned that in one period you had a tendency to [tape interference].

PALMQUIST: This was in the same period because this was a very . . . this was a time of very great political unrest. Your activities were mainly not on the conservative end, but mainly what you can call progressive or pink or red activities. So if you were active at all, you would be active in problem solving or attempts at problem solving, rather than system maintenance because the system was falling apart. Those were the days when you had to have mortgage moratoriums in order to keep the financial system from crumbling and Roosevelt saved the banks and the insurance companies by these types of moratoriums. So that, what was a perfectly natural phenominon in those days--it's different now when we have a far different type of revolution. The revolution then was more economic. It was a different type of economic and social condition. In those days, you addressed the economic situation, and the revolution was against the system which allowed the terrible things to happen that happened in those days. Actually, people starving in the streets--in Minneapolis there were usually four or five people that were found in the doorways in the downtown district dead from starvation or malnutrition or from freezing to death in the wintertime. So, you've got to think of what

PALMQUIST: the political activities were in those days against the social and economic condition that affected people's lives.

In this day and age, the revolution is more social and hardly adresses any economic condition because people are now either well-fed or suffer from malnutrition because of poor food habits, not from, at least in Alaska, not from a lack in ability to acquire the economic means of purchasing food. So, you have a much more conservative area and arena in this present day and age. Whether it will have the same impact on history will only be known in the future.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel close to anybody who identified themselves as communists or socialists; or were any of your close friends socialists?

PALMQUIST: Well, my husband, Mr. Palmquist was not really a politico in the sense that it is normally used. He was a union activist and an organizer and not a planner. There were a number of people in Minneapolis of all shades of political opinion. On the one hand, you had the employer group struggling to maintain their top position in society. And on the other hand, you had the worker and unemployed group attempting to reach a position of power where they would at least enjoy some of the fruits of their labor, or more of the fruits of their labor. As to women's issues, my first, other than being a, just a fighter for women's rights, starting our from the natural position of having no discrimination in my own home nor in the schools in the town in which I grew up. I went into the work force assuming that there was equality. I first learned about the inequality through the League of Women Voters' university branch, and I was involved as an active member of the Committee on "Women in Industry." In those days we supported the protective legislation for women in industry: the hours, the type of work, the rest periods--coffee breaks which are so common today was an issue of great stress and fighting and it was done originally for women in industry; that they needed this rest period and a break from assembly-line work. In the office there was no coffee break. People were expected to work straight through with the exception of restroom leaves.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have the feeling now that protective legislation should be abolished for women or that it should be extended to both women and men?

PALMQUIST: I think that as time went on it became very apparent that what was good for women was good also for men. If women should have only eight hours of work per day it was important that men only worked eight hours a day. The arguments might be a little bit different in that women needed to be home with their families because women still did have all of the home responsibilities, in addition to working outside the home, whereas men did not have, essentially, responsibilities in the home. But the argument by labor was that the employer gained by having their employees work only eight hours a day in that, with time off and recreation and involvement

PALMQUIST: with their families, when they came back to work they would be much more efficient.

Later on, as I became involved with that element of the League of Women Voters', as were known in those days, suffragettes, I then became more active in, and in the unions, which generally supported protective legislation for women, we were active in backing legislation and in electing candidates which had the point of view that was more sympathetic to labor unions. In those days, there wasn't the same emphasis on consciousness-raising that we have now. It was a head-on fight to get conditions for women. I think I answered the question as to when workers were laid off, although this is not as regards after the World War II, for instance, I was still in school after World War I and not in the labor market and in World War II, shortly after the war, we came up to Alaska and we therefore were not involved with problems connected with labor in the industry lay-off of women which were hired during the labor shortage years. Of course, during the depression period, both employed and unemployed went through the stages of organization in order to deal with the problems of that day.

INTERVIEWER: Were you aware of the fact that women were being crowded off jobs that they got during the war? Did you have any feeling about it at all?

PALMQUIST: Well, I wouldn't have any experience in that since I was too young after World War I and I was in Alaska where there was no problem with getting employment after World War II.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't have any experience but were you aware of any, did you have any feelings about it?

PALMQUIST: Well, what I did notice was that when women went into war work and had a way of maintaining themselves that they then sought divorces and separations from husbands that they were not compatible with, and that is what I did notice. This gave women a freedom and broke the chains to which they were tied, when they had no means of supporting themselves. Now, what type of support we got from other types of organizations in the twenties or the thirties, forties, of course, I'm not familiar with the twenties. In the thirties, the YW's and YM's were very liberal and progressive, and addressed almost the same questions that labor unions addressed, and the foremost among the churches in Minneapolis was the Unitarian church which addressed the economic problems of the day and the poverty and other social problems that confronted the workers.

Settlement houses were progressive. I was familiar with two settlement houses in that period and the settlement house, which was in a black neighborhood, was very outstanding in Minneapolis as far as fighting for conditions. In the thirties, there was additional support from the Farmers Union and from the organized unemployed.

PALMQUIST: Yes, there was a comraderie that developed among union activists and I think that it was mixed, although possibly there was some separation by sex. That there might have been additional planning type socialization where the men might have got together and the women, but in my own socializing, although the union that I was originally in--the Office and Professional Workers Union was more women than men and, therefore, the planning would entail more women than men. The activities with the Alaska Railroad, were, on the other hand, more male than female by quite a bit. However, in the American Federation of Government Employees, there wasn't quite the same closeness that there was during the depression years because we really, I use the expression, "huddled together," although that is not accurate entirely.

In those days, we had a socialist mayor, Mayor Anderson. He was succeeded then by a labor Democratic Party candidate who is now Senator Humphrey. He was followed by Martin Klein, whose original campaign I had conducted in a conservative neighborhood. Although I was first a business agent and then a kind of combination steward-organizer at the Alaska Railroad, I believed that my record was as a griever. I was extremely tenacious. I didn't seem to know how to ever give up, and compromise didn't seem to become a part of my strategy. I would fight head-on and if I didn't succeed at the lower levels I would proceed going up the ladder until.... As I said before, I was quite a thorn in the side of the employer, the management at the Alaskan Railroad. I did enjoy considerable confidence of the union membership. I was always an advocate of the underdog and against discrimination. I always spoke directly to the subject. I was never on the side of the employer and I found in practice, as a griever, that if fellow workers were unanimously for an employee who felt aggrieved, he was aggrieved. If there was dissent among the fellow workers, then you would have a mixed situation, of the employee being partly wrong and the employer being partly wrong. If the grievance stemmed mainly from the actions of the employee himself, then he had very little support among his fellow workers, and in those type of cases I would attempt to get the employee to see what his real problem was; that it was not the employer but the employee, and if he still was in trouble and would attempt to correct some of his working faults. I would then go to the employer in an attempt to gain a leniency for the employee on the basis of his personal needs, rather than his being right. I believe that I was successful as a griever. I think the very fact that the Alaska Railroad wanted to get rid of me was (laughs) proof of that!

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the other various groups to which you belonged?

PALMQUIST: Of course, I was interested in the PTA once I had children in school. I was active in the PTA's. I would be active in those things which affected the community whether it was the type of government, as for instance, Alaska, I worked for statehood, I

PALMQUIST: worked in how, what kind of a borough we should have. I served on many rough committees during my homesteading days, like on the Roads Committee. I was chairman of the 1967 Alaska Centennial Committee. Some other committee which I forget right now. I was active with the various work programs such as the Neighborhood Youth Corp. Trying to straighten out problems that young students, especially male students, had with a certain school superintendent. I was quite active in dealing with the state department of education before the boroughs were established in attempting to get a Wasilla school district so that we could run our own affairs.

INTERVIEWER: How did various strikes and organizing campaigns affect the women workers?

PALMQUIST: Women are just as good strikers as men. I remember being on a picket line and a woman trying to cross over to go to work as a strike breaker and just on the spur of the moment I battered her one with my purse and she went running away but the police didn't see me, so I got out of that one in good order. (laughs) Possibly in strikes, unless the women were in the majority, it very probably was true, as I would judge, that men were more active in the planning stages and the strategy than the women. As you know, in those days when the employers used all kinds of underhanded tactics, the unions had to resort to certain strategies, and one of them was the business agent had a fund that he had no strings on and that was used in order to combat maiming or death threats from the employer.

INTERVIEWER: How would it be used?

PALMQUIST: Like beating up a strike breaker in an alley, for instance. Or beating up a boss who was using unfair tactics.

INTERVIEWER: You mean they would hire thugs out of this . . .

PALMQUIST: Oh no, they, the union, never hired any thugs, they had stalwarts among the ranks. (laughs) But, you had to be able to fight somewhat to counteract the type of tactics which were used by the employers.

INTERVIEWER: What was the money used for?

PALMQUIST: It was a fund. It might be, for instance, maybe to buy off a strike breaker or to intimidate him.

INTERVIEWER: What was the most exciting part of your life?

PALMQUIST: I think possibly the most difficult time, which was the depression years; they were the most turbulent, but they were also the most exciting.

INTERVIEWER: If you had a daughter, would you want her to live through your experiences?

PALMQUIST: Not necessarily my experiences, I'm hoping that she will do better. I have my three children, all of them very good citizens, active in the community. I can be proud of them but they are more conservative than I was and than I would wish them to be. But this is not a, this is not an economic upheaval of time and so they all do very well. They all have comfortable homes and so on, and maybe they're a little too comfortable.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been generally more comfortable working with women than with men?

PALMQUIST: No, I have equally good relationships, I believe, with men and with women. Possibly, I talk the language of men a little bit better than the language of women. And, of course, I don't mean vulgarity.

INTERVIEWER: What were your approaches in getting women involved in union work?

PALMQUIST: I was active in getting the women to vote. Yes, I always worked very actively to get the union membership out to vote, although it was directed broadside to stimulate the union membership. In the Farmer Labor Party they had a special segment like we now have in Alaska for youth where you have double representation. In Minnesota, the Farmer Labor Party had double representation for women, I suppose to encourage their activity, as in Alaska we are now giving double representation to youth in order to encourage youth. This, of course, I mean in the Democratic Party. In those days the Democratic women, through Democratic Women's Clubs, had representation in the conventions in addition to their having representation from the precincts, from the wards. Minneapolis had wards, from their unions, and I was opposed to women getting this special type of recognition because it was wrong for anyone to have more than one vote or the chance of more than one vote.

INTERVIEWER: What influenced your life's direction most?

PALMQUIST: Probably that I was brought up in poverty. Being foreign born, or rather of foreign born parents and not speaking the English language and undergoing certain discrimination socially from the school kids probably gave me a certain, the emotional backing for the perseverance and tenacity which I had in whatever I decided to do. At the university, reading the history of the labor movement I'm sure had a dramatic effect. And in those days, it was the days of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial--and incidentally, in Juneau, there is a man who was the lawyer defending Sacco and Vanzetti. He is an old man and his losing the battle for those two labor people caused him to give up the legal profession

PALMQUIST: entirely and he is in Juneau now, just doing youth work.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know who he is?

PALMQUIST: I won't name him. And the history of Eugene V. Debs, of course, I belonged to the socialist general movement. I was in favor of presidential candidate Thomas of the Socialist Party. I noticed and observed that there was a strong relationship or interconnection in thinking and in policy between the union movement and the socialist movement. There was a considerable intertwining. Those who were the outstanding union leaders were also socialists of one stripe or another. Of course, I have always supported the ERA which, of course, is rather a late manifestation of the fight for women's rights. I belong to the AAUW [American Association of University Women] which has a strong program for the adoption by the correct number of states to have success in this constitutional amendment. And I'm also a very active member of the Business and Professional Women who also have a strong plank for women's equal rights. I testified in Juneau for the then Senate Bill Number 60, which was for credit and other rights for women regardless of status. I mention those as examples.

INTERVIEWER: What was the most frustrating part of working with unions?

PALMQUIST: The most frustrating part was probably our opposition, which was the organized employer. One of the men I had to deal with in Minneapolis was an able negotiator from the standpoint of the narrow-minded employers and he was just as tenacious on the other side of the fence and probably more tenacious because he came with more tools for fighting a battle than a person representing a union. And the other frustration was the conservatism and holds of internationals. The most satisfying is when you negotiate a good contract or when you succeed in righting a wrong in an employment situation of an employee. I always felt it was worth it. I never felt that the battle wasn't worth it.

INTERVIEWER: If you were sixteen years old how would you relive your life?

PALMQUIST: I probably would have much better direction and consistency but I certainly would be in the labor movement and those other movements which are for the rights of the mass of the people, most of whom and all of whom have to work for a living. For instance, I attend the black caucuses. I am a member of the NAACP. I'm a member of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. I'm a member of Common Cause. I support, and now that I'm in a salary position where I can support other than by activities, I support financially. I would not change my number of children and although I am divorced woman and have been married three times, I do not consider that my marriages did not contribute something to my life at the time that I was married. They were relationships that were quite satisfactory and when they ceased to be, the relationship ceased. I'm hoping that now that I'm in the arena of working for advantages that should be rightfully those

PALMQUIST: of the elderly, I know that this can be accomplished only through the organization of the elderly and that is why I am active in that field to this day and probably will be for the rest of my life. That doesn't mean I'm not interested in those causes which lead to better government. And it doesn't mean that I won't be active in the political arena to elect those candidates that I believe are better for us than the opposition candidates whenever, whatever the case might be.

INTERVIEWER: How about the women's issues in the union; have you ever felt frustrated at the union and its attitudes towards women's issues or particular women's issues or . . .

PALMQUIST: In the union field today, just as with minorities, it is important that workers have a seniority system. Otherwise they lose one of the main tools of security on the job. And since minorities and women were excluded in the past, and it's very difficult for them to break in to this seniority system. The only way that they can do it is like the young males just now coming into the working force who have the same problem and they can start, you might say, at the bottom of the seniority system along with the others.

The main problem that I observed as the business agent for Tri-Trades dealing with state employees and the crafts was that women made applications who did not have the crafts development or craft skills to compete for the jobs. If the job required no skills then they were dispatched in their order of application. But for the main part, for instance, to use the example of survey crews--a woman couldn't expect to come in and be an instrument manager if she didn't even know what an instrument was. She couldn't be a head chairman if she hadn't been a rear chairman. She certainly couldn't be a party chief because a party chief has to be quite expert and have a considerable backlog of knowledge especially in certain areas of mathematics. Similarly, in a position of truck driving or operating a back how or a D-9 or a D-8 or a D-7 or whatever, or a crane, for instance--which is a highly skilled job--you can't break into those unless you have some experience.

Now, of course, the men have the advantage there because they got the experience some years back and they hold positions through their expertise. The same as a gal couldn't professionally break into nursing or doctors or geologists or any other profession unless she had the background. So, the thing that we need to do, we need to change the educational system. The schools, in addition to teaching the three "r's" and other related subjects, should certainly spend some time on teaching the crafts without regard to discrimination favoring the boys and disfavoring the girls which to that extent we did work this year for the anti-discrimination bill in our educational system and if we can eradicate sexism from the school books,

PALMQUIST: from the schools, from the athletic programs, wherever we find it, we will have the girls coming into the work force without the handicaps which our educational system and our whole social outlook has imposed on them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel like there should be no remedial measures made to include women and minorities that would set aside the seniority system to some degree or that they should not be . . .?

PALMQUIST: Well, of course the national EEO program and the anti-discrimination legislation does address that; as for instance, in the pipeline, employers had to meet quotas and although quotas have certain objections on the face of it, there needs to be stressed that employers must look at percentages. But, the employer can't do very much if he is working mainly in skilled crafts and it isn't really his responsibility to train. It is the state's and the educational and the community's responsibility--it is society's responsibility to see that the training is non-discriminatory so that natives and blacks and women are able to compete. The other thing which needs to be addressed and that is that science has not done very much to date, to ease the burden which women largely bear and that is childbearing. And I believe that the one thing about modern society that I'm very much in favor of and that is splitting childcare responsibilities and home responsibilities. Since everyone works much shorter hours, there is no reason why men and women shouldn't assume home responsibilities equally. Of course, women will have to give up their right, "I'm the boss of the house and you're the boss of the outside" attitude. It'll have to be a shared responsibility and a shared decision-making, which in the past women enjoyed the decision-making when it came to the home and mainly to the children.

The family planning is a great thing for the emancipation of women. Should we ever reach a stage where we bear our children with a shorter gestation period I think we'll have it made.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that unions ought to push making....It's been considered a women's issue that unions should push for employers' provision of day care centers.

PALMQUIST: Well my answer to that is, if the men ever begin taking care of the children, they'll want the day care centers. (laughs)

I can't think of anything else excepting that I consider working in the labor movement a very satisfying life's work. I don't know what you can do to better the conditions of the society unless you're in a life-saving type of medical profession or, well, fighting is a much smaller group, al-

PALMQUIST: though very necessary. We should give some recognition to the crafts. Probably the sewer maintenance people are probably more important than college professors when it really comes down to the effect on society.

In my day, college professors bemoaned the fact that they made less than plumbers and pipe fitters and I thought then and I think the same to this day, "Hey, college professors, maybe the plumbers and the steam fitters perform a more essential task."

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