BM: This is Bernard McNicholl interviewing Mrs. Ann Bryant for the Coal Tyee History Project.

BM: Mrs. Bryant, what year were you born?

AB: 1888.

BM: 1888? And were you born in Nanaimo?

AB: No, I was born in England.

BM: And what part of England were you born in?

AB: In Staffordshire.

BM: Staffordshire?

AB: Yes.

BM: And whereabouts is that?

AB: It is in the Midlands.

BM: In the Midlands. Humhum. And what prompted your father to come out to Nanaimo? Was he approached or was there an advertisement or whatever?

AB: Well, yes at that time there was a lot of people leaving, or had left for Nanaimo for the coal mining history. And he decided to he'd like to come out.

BM: And was it for a change? Better wages or...

AB: Better everything, practically.

BM: He just wanted to see if he could make a better life for himself and his family?

AB: Yes. Right.

BM: And... you came by boat, right?

AB: We came by boat.

BM: And how long did it take you to cross the Atlantic?

AB: Oh, I think it took about seven days.

BM: Seven days?

AB: Ya.
BM: Well, I'm thinking a little too far back. You were in steam power then?

AB: Well, I just don't remember that part of it. The only thing I remember is getting on the.... we went by train from where we lived to Liverpool and we had to get on, what they called a packet, and the packet took you to the boat. The boat didn't come right in. I guess, there was no water, I suppose, those days, And we went on this packet. And that's about as much as I remember, because after the boat got out, I was so seasick all the way, I don't remember anything on the boat.

BM: Yes. And what part of Canada did you land in first?

AB: Halifax.

BM: Halifax. And that was the port of entry at that time?

AB: Yes.

BM: One of them anyhow.

AB: Yes.

BM: And did you come across Canada by train?

AB: We went by train then to Chicago.

BM: Into Chicago?

AB: Humhum.

BM: Ye.

AB: And from there then into W...

BM: Humhum. And then finally eventually to got to Vancouver... or did you go across the states first?

AB: Well, we stayed in the States for a couple years. And dad worked in several mines there. And then we... he kept getting in trouble because of his labour talks..

BM: Humhum.

AB:.... and we finally came back to Nanaimo where he had been, you see.

BM: Oh, your father was out previous?

AB: My father was out ... ah.. for four years out here, before he had enough money to bring us all out. Then he came back and was bringing us
out, and that's the way we came across United States.

BM: Yes. So, it was probably a very startling and shocking contrast from, you know, England, the mild climate, to Wyoming in Nebraska, was it?

AB: Wisconsin in Colorado.

BM: Wisconsin. That would have been a contrast between the climate in England and the harshness... you know. American Prairies?

AB: Yes, I will remember being in a little place called Aldridge, and it was up in the mountains just outside of Yellowstone Park. At those days, you had to go into what is now Gardener, to get up the hill to where this mine was, which is now a ghost town. And we didn't have very much summer. It was frozen all winter, and the mine was on the hillside, and it was a lake below, and it was just that steep down. You had to dig the hillside out to put your house in, and the miners... the weather was so bad the miners was all... watched each other and very often we had to go and dig somebody out so that they can get their door open. The snow was so deep.

BM: How did your mother put up with this?

AB: Oh, she got her hands frozen a few times, but...

BM: It must have been fairly hard on her being...

AB: Very hard on her.

BM: Because, you know, she was English, you know...

AB: Ya.

BM: ...and a different lifestyle, completely.

AB: Yes. Absolutely. But she was very courageous... And she was very tolerant. She really... I don't think, I have ever met anybody that was so tolerant as my mother was.

BM: Ya. Early pioneer woman. They just had to put up with practically anything.

AB: Yes.

BM: Even though their were sitting and saying, "let's go back to a place where I know I can survive or something like this, but they kept it all inside and... they were willing to make the sacrifice,
AB: Well, she was so in love... with my father that, you know,
BM: Humhum.
AB: ... she would put up with anything(?), just to be with him. That's the main thing.
BM: Yes.
AB: I know that she was very broken hearted lots of times and very lonely, coming away from all her relatives and come out to this country.
BM: Was she a little happier to come to Nanaimo that was sort of a little bit like England, a bit, in the weather?
AB: Yes. She made herself very happy here, because when we got here there were other families that came out from the same town that we lived in, that she knew.
BM: That would have raised her heart a little bit.
AB: And we lived in the southend of town, near on Nicol Street, and there was, oh, five or six families that came from the same place we did, and we really... it was really very happy that way.
BM: Humhum. Because their are people she knew.
AB: Friends, yes.
BM: She felt like she was not alone in this big country.
AB: No. Her brother came out for one thing. That's the only relative on the other side of the family we had out here, and his name was Jones.
BM: Humhum.
AB: And... Howard Nicholson is a grandson from my uncle, my mother's brother.
BM: And... you lived on Nicol Street then.
AB: Yes.
BM: And your father, the coal miner, did he... what mine did he work in?
AB: Well, when he first came out by himself here, he was at Wellington.
BM: Oh, yes.
AB: But before he came to England they moved him to Number 1 shaft, that was opening up at that time.
BM: Which Wellington are you referring to? North Wellington?
AB: yes. The Wellington mine is out here.
BM: So, that was one of the original mines then?
AB: Yes, that was the only mine that was going at that time, I believe. And then later, Number 1 started, and then a few more opened up here and there, you know.
BM: Oh, yes.
AB: But he worked in Number 1 and South Wellington and there was another one...
BM: Harewood or Wakesiah? Jinglepot?
AB: No. Jinglepot... not Jinglepot.
BM: Protection? Reserve?
AB: Well, Nanaimo, Number 1 and Protection was practically together, you know.
BM: Yes. Protection shaft used to go down for the workers.
AB: Yes. So that... you go right over to Protection under water.
BM: And what was your father's job? Was he a digger? A fire boss? Or?
AB: My father when he was in England, he went into the mines when he was about twelve years old.
BM: Hmmm.
AB: He didn't have much education.
BM: No.
AB: But he made... he took to mining very well, and he educated himself to be a mine manager.
BM: Hmmm.
AB: So, he's had many jobs in between. He finally became the government inspector of mines for the Atland district (?)
BM: And where is the Atland district?
AB: Prince Rupert, way, you know.
BM: Oh, I see.
AB: He lived in Prince Rupert at that time.
BM: So, did he work his way up the coal mining ranks here in Nanaimo?
AB: Yes. He took courses by mail, mostly from the correspondence school. And at one time, the correspondence school had all his certificates on display, both here and Vancouver. He had more certificates in mining than anyone then around at that time.
BM: So, he didn't just work as a coal miner. He worked as a coal miner but he also took this occupation to improve himself?
AB: Yes. Right along.
BM: So, he was a very intelligent man then?
AB: Yes. To a certain extent, ya. He... to me he could have been a little broader, you know, what I mean? Mining, mining, mining. A lot of mining. I think a person needs a little more than that to round out their lives.
BM: Ya. But I suppose, that coal mining being the only industry, I guess he used that one industry and expanded it to its fullest compacity for himself.
AB: Ya. He certainly did.
BM: Yes. So, he was a mine manager. Whereabouts did he live when he was a mine manager?
AB: Ah, I don't think, he ever was a mine manager. He got all the... he was up to fire boss and shut lighter and, oh, I can't just remember all those, but I don't think he ever took a mine manager, as long as I can remember, but he did have a certificate for mine manager.
BM: Oh, I see.
AB: And he became mine inspector for the district.
BM: What that a pretty prestigious job?
AB: Well, yes, he had to go around and visit all the mines and all the prospects. He would go to Alert Bay and that was the furthest down this way, he came, and up into previ er (?) mines and what's the other one, and then right into various prospects in Atland.
BM: Oh, yes.
AB: He went once a year to the prospects.. Travelled. Most... at that time, many a places you have to travel on horseback to get to them.
BM: So, he spent quite a considerable time away from home and his family?
AB: Yes. He did. After he had to move to Prince Rupert, because that was where he was stationed as a mine manager, I mean: mine inspector.
BM: Did the family go up with them or did they make two residents?
AB: Well, quite a few of us were married at that time.
BM: Oh, yes
AB: And the rest went with him up there.

BM: So, your mother went with him then?

AB: Oh, yes.

BM: What do you remember, growing up in the Nanaimo area as a little child. What sort of things would you do? Would you go down to the mine workings and go down the mines or something like that and visit sometimes or play around...

AB: No, I never did go down the mines here in Nanaimo. I did go into the mines in... Montana... with my dad.

BM: What was that like?

AB: It wasn't (was) a shaft you walked in. And I went in there. He took me in one time. And that was as I mentioned close to Yellowstone Park up in the hills.

BM: Yes.

AB: And... I went in there. And there was a blast furnace which caused... which made for ventilation at that time. But the mines have improved so much now. They don't have any more of that.

BM: So, was it a scary experience for you or where you just sort of fascinated than you were frightened?

AB: I went right in to where the stoole to dig the coal, you know, and dad would have me go in, you know. You just had to crouch down to go inside the cars, you know. But that's the only time I ever went into a mine.

BM: Do you remember Mount Baker? Mount Baker, the mountain that's the volcano? Do you ever remember it erupting?

AB: No, I don't.

BM: Because they had lady, she said, she saw smoke and stuff come out of it. I was just remembering if you remembered it?

AB: No, I don't remember at all.

BM: She was about the same age as you were.

AB: Well, we were brought up very strict. Tell you. I guess, I was never even
allowed to go to town for a long time.

BM: Humhum.

AB: You know. So that I... in the early years, we didn't get away from home very much. We had home duties all the time to do. It was a large family.

BM: What sort of home duties were you expected to do?

AB: Oh, we had to help mother with any of the household work. We lived on the corner of Nicol Street and Street. In those days, we had five cows and a horse and chickens and rabbits in the back yard. So, there was always plenty to do.

BM: What was the rabbits for?

AB: For food.

BM: So, you ate the rabbit?

AB: Yes.

BM: Hu. Today you keep 'em for pets. (chuckle)

AB: No, we... used to have rabbits for some time and chickens and never had pigs, but we did have cows, and we had ... finally, my dad had a ... finally my dad bought a... a five acre lot on what we called Five Acres, which was right behind what was the cricket field those days. We owned that five acre lot there and my oldest brother had to take those cows after they were milked in the morning, out to the field on his way to school and bring them home on his way home from school. So, we were always kept busy, all of us.

BM: Where did your brother go to school then I suppose you went to the same school too?

AB: Oh, yes. At that time, he was going to John Shaw School.

BM: Oh yes. And did you ever go to... I heard a school called South Ward...?

AB: That's where we started school. All of us. That's where we started our schooling was at the South Ward. From there we went to the Middle Ward, some of us, not all. Mostly we went to John Shaw after that.
BM: What was the move from South Ward to Middle Ward: What was the reason for that? Was it just a ... it was a higher grade level?

AB: Yes. Higher grade.

BM: And John Shaw was that supposedly the highschool?

AB: Well, practically, two classes to entrance.

John Shaw was highschool, and then there was another fellow, I think his name was Russell on the other side of the road, he was the first highschool.

I got to entrance class, that is as far as I got.

BM: What level would be entrance class? Grade 8?

AB: Well, now, let's see. Shaw's was twelve, wasn't it? Highschool, eleven, Grade 10, I guess.

BM: Yes. Was it your parents aspiration for you to get a complete education and go straight to highschool?

AB: I wanted to be a teacher in the worst way. But my father said, I was needed at home.

BM: So, what was expected of a girl in those days? I mean, what things was she supposed to do?

AB: There was not very much for a girl those days.

BM: No.

AB: There was not very much in employment, unless you could go out and look after somebody when they were havin' a baby or something like that, you know. Do housework. You might get a little odd job. Ah... there wasn't enough. There wasn't enough jobs because the town was small and... really (chuckle)... unless you were a good acquaintance with the boss' wife or... and they had families and they would get their families in... you didn't have much chance.

BM: Humhum

AB: You know, they used their own families, those days.

BM: So, it was really a man's world at that time for a town that small.

AB: Yes. It wasn't very much... it wasn't very much for girls. Not until you got to... well not until I got to about seventeen or eighteen, then I remember getting a job in Spencer's at Xmas time, which is where Eaton's now. It wasn't near as big.
BM: What did you do? What was your job at Spencer's?
AB: It was a Xmas job in... I was in the book department.
BM: And you sold books?
AB: Yes.
BM: Was Spencer's the same size as Eaton's today?
AB: No, nothing near it. No. No.
BM: It was smaller. Could you describe Spencer's to me? What do you remember about it?
AB: Well, there was just two door ways, like... it wasn't very big. It wasn't any bigger than the one door way they've got now.
BM: Humhum
AB: Because beyond that was the delivery station, before you turned the corner, you know, there. And then on the other side, there was two hotels, small hotels. I think, one of them is still there, where that pond shop is.
BM: The Terminal Hotel, they call it now.
AB: No, not that. Terminal, that's a newer, that's a brick one, isn't it? There was a wooden one. There was two wooden hotels there next to...
next to Spencer's.
BM: Oh.
AB: Real old wooden once with the on the top, you know, and the post holdin' them up.
BM: They are not there anymore?
AB: No. One part... one part is there, and I think, if I remember right, it's a pond shop there right now. And what else? There used to be a
BM: They've got Block Brothers in there and there is some kind of hair dresser thing there, and then there is an antic shop in the corner in the same part as the pond shop. There is the pond shop and then down further there is the hotel and there is a jewelry store in the hotel, and then there are two old wooden buildings. One is Ernie Johnston's Hardware...
AB: Oh, ya, that one is there. And next to that is another little quisy one in there. That is nearly fallen over.
BM: It is now an archaic... a Penny Archaic (?)
AB: Is it. Well, that used to be
... used to be a barber shop.
BM: Well, the barber shop is up further. It's on the other side of Ernie Johnston, it's attached to Ernie Johnston.
AB: Well, there is an old building there.
BM: Yes. (talking overlapping.
AB: You go around the back...
AB: Eaton's Street and have a look at it, is it fallen over.
BM: Ya. I was just sitting there wondering, you know, what you can see when you look over the corner of Eaton's, you can see down and then they are all by little wires.
AB: Oh.
BM: I don't know, I mean, I think, it's good to preserve heritage buildings, but they've let those go beyond repair.
AB: There was... who... Quinn's, in a web on those small hotels at that time. Underneath it was Mac Kenzie's candy store there. That's year ago. Candies, ice cream parlour.
BM: Oh, Mac Kenzie's ice cream parlour? And it was down in the basement?
AB: No, it was on the lower floor, you know.
BM: Oh.
AB: On the sidewalk, and then upstairs was the hotel.
BM: Oh, yes, yes, of course. And what other stores did they have in Nanaimo?
AB: Well they had a little Big shop... further along there, or somewhere past where Johnston's store is. But there was an opening there where you could go through the back. I don't know what happened to that. I got filled in in one way or another. When we first came here, there was...
I do remember, that Terminal Hotel was there. And then further along, there was John Young Store,. That's all been torn down and new buildings put up in there now. And... I remember the old... on the other side of the street quite well.
BM: What was on the other side of the street?
AB: Well, on the other side was another hotel, you know. And then around the corner was the old Hardy Drugstore. It was quite a...
BM: In the old Hardy Drugstore, what would they sell in that store? Like... opium at one time was legal. Did they sell opium?
AB: Not that I ever knew.
BM: So, I guess, just then in Chinatown?
AB: In Chinatown. I think, I heard that. If I remember right, yes.
BM: Was that a forbidden place for your, Chinatown?
AB: Oh, no.
BM: Did you ever go there and visit and look around?
AB: On New Year's. The Chinese New Year's, yes.
BM: You used to go and watched the fire works and things eh?
AB: Yes.
BM: Humhum. What do you remember about that?
AB: Oh, they used to have fire works in the middle of the street and they used to give us... kind of a candy thing, it was like a nut but it was soft inside and was very palatable. And it was about that round, you know. And you took the shell off and there was a nut inside it, but you eat round that. I forget, what they called 'em, but they were very palatable. And we used to get quite a few of those there.
BM: I wonder what that could have been.
AB: And.. those days, mind you, they had their hair and pig tails and that.
BM: Humhum. So, all the ethnic Chinese there dressed the way we would imagine them to dress, like, maybe like luli style.
AB: Oh, yes.
BM: And the funny pants, the shoes and the long tied skirts or something like that. What would you say was the people's opinion of the Chinese? Was there a predigious attitude towards them then?
AB: A little, yes. Because, when we were in the Sourh Ward School, we had Chinese pupils there, and there was some objections. But they were very well behaved. We never had any trouble with them, you know.
BM: They were very, very shy people.
AB: Yes. We had Chinese in... there was just two classes at tha South Ward School when we came first. It was smaller, It was built on later. But it was just two classes. I remeber, there was a Miss Lafeur (?) and then this Jenkins at the top there at the time. That's way, way back. Just the two classes there.
BM: Did they have the old hickory stick in those schools?
AB: What?
BM: The hickory stick? You know, if anyone was bad, they would give them a strap with the hickory stick?
AB: Oh, yes. Strap mostly.
BM: Why would they use the strap? For what reason?
AB: Oh.... I never had it. So I can't.... (laughter) tell you what reason.
BM: "cause my mother, she says when she was going to school in early forties, she had a teacher that would... strap her if she wasn't doing her work, dropped her pencils or erasers, she didn't anything, what she considered, what a student shouldn't be doing. She got the strap for it. And that's ridiculous. You know what I mean.
AB: No, I don't remember anything like that.
Unless they were very bad, you know. Then...
BM: So, it just when they really got out of line, they would get the strap.
AB: Yes. The boys mostly. I don't remember any girls getting into too much trouble there. Maybe we got kept in after school and have to write so many lines and things like that. But...
BM: What was expected of a girl then, I mean, morally? What was she not supposed to do? What was she allowed to do? And things like that? Was it often that a girl was not allowed to say, to this on a certain day or if she was wearing a dress, she wasn't allowed to climb trees or something? What things weren't you supposed to do?
AB: Well..... I guess it was terrible. We climbed too much. We are not supposed to... The only thing I remember about anything like that was I was the eldest in the family and my father used to take me if he was doing carpentry work, he 'ld have me halpin', if he was doing gardening work, he 'ld have me helping, and he had me on the roof at one time, and oh, that was terrible, I was scared terrible. I turned around and told him that he better put pants on me and be done with it, cause it was terrible for girls to wear man pants those days, you know. That was a disgrace. My father was really being told to put pants on me.
EM: Because he was making you ...
AB: ... do boy's work.
EM: ... boy's work. So, a girl was supposed to...
AB: You were supposed to go to church on Sunday three times a day and... (chuckle)
BM: So, you used to go to church three times a day on Sundays?
AB: Yes.

BM: Well, was church a really influential thing then?
AB: The Haliburton Street Church? Oh, ya.

(Talking overlapping)
BM: I used to go to Haliburton Street Church.
AB: Oh, yes. It was quite the thing there. We had quite a good church there at that time, you know. It was a good congregation. There was what we call the Epi. people and there was everything there, you know.

BM: So, would church play a social aspect. Like, they would hold dances bazaars and things like that?
AB: Not dances. That was disallowed.
BM: Why would that be disallowed?
AB: Oh, that was... oh.. you are not allowed to go to a dance in my day.
BM: You mean, not even like little family dance...
AB: No.
BM:... where they were doing little waltzes and things like that?

BM: Well, did they hold dances elsewhere?
AB: They did have dances, yes.
BM: But you weren't allowed to go?
AB: I wasn't allowed to go. But I did go later on in life. And then is the time, I was running up Nichol Street, trying to beat my dad home, so he wouldn't know I had been out to a dance. (chuckle)
BM: So...
AB: He was working in Brechin mine then, you know. He was the boss of the Brechin mine. Now, I can't tell you, what boss he was. But he was a boss in Brechin mine. And we had a horse and buggy. He used to drive to work. And believe me, I went through Allan's Dancing Class to learn to dance. Which was in that building, just on top...
just has been torn down now. Right across the road on Nichol Street
from the old fire hall. Maybe that old building it's been torn down
lately.
BM: Yes. They put the Caprice Theater in there, I think.
AB: You see.
BM: Humhum.
AB: From the old fire hall, you know on that corner Nichol and Victoria
Road.
BM: Yes.
AB: Well, he had a dance class upstairs, and I... many a time, I run home
as hard as I could go to beat my dad home, so he wouldn't know that I
was out that late.
BM: How late was that?
AB: Eleven o'clock.
BM: Eleven o'clock.
AB: Ya.
BM: That was pretty late then, wasn't it?
AB: Oh, yes.
BM: That's even a little late today too. What did your mother think about
this. Did she sort of....
AB: Oh, my mother thought it was all right. My mother shielded us
quite a bit, because she thought we should have a little bit of life.
BM: Humhum.
AB: She was very quiet and you know. Our house was built with a front...
you had a few steps to go up when you got to the back. You could step
out of the bath room right onto the ground. And many a time...
several of us snug out. nd my dad used to go to bed before eight
o'clock (emphasis). Expected everybody else to go to bed. Of course,
he got up at five o'clock in the morning to go to work, you know.
BM: Yes.
AB: And that was the kind of life that the miners lived.
BM: So, your mother... even... what would she do after here husband
go to bed? She was just sort of sitting there and says:"It's fine for
you to go out for a couple of hours but be back."
AB: Oh, yes.
BM: So, she would use this as a kind of... how do you call it.... a reward for being good?
AB: Hum.
BM: When you were being good she would say,"O.K. I let you go out tonight." You know, is that like that?
AB: She always knew where we were.
BM: Hum.
AB: Always.
BM: Yes.
AB: She always knew. I remember, we were quite an age, I guess, I was nearly seventeen, we'd never been allowed to stay up for New Year's Night. Never been allowed to. So, this New Years we made up our mind, my sister and I, we were gonna go out for New Year's. That's all that is to it. Mother know all about it. Seys:"Father goes off to bed at eight o'clock," and we were in bed with our clothes on, and we just slip out. So we went out through the bath room window and went across the street. The house across the street, there was a bunch of girls there, and so we were waiting for twelve o'clock. Oh, we were quite excited getting out, staying out til twelve o'clock. And my sister was always full of fun, you know, and we got out there, and started making a racket. And I guess it woke my dad up and she started to laugh real hard at something.'
I dont'tknow, what happened. And my mother told us after she woke up. "That's our Lizy." "Oh, no, it's not," she says."They are asleep, It's not her." He says,"That's our Lizy, I'm sure of that, that's our Lizy." (Chuckle) In England, you know, everything was "our". Our aunt, our Lizy, and our, you know. So, anyway, he turned the light on. And we saw the light. And we knew, we had to run, and we run. And we got in that bath room window into the bed with our clothes on before he got to the bed room door.
BM: (laughter)
AB: So, he opened the door and looked in and came over to the bed and we were just holding our breaths, you know. And he said,"Oh,oh , well,
they are in here." She says, "Well, I told you they were all right." She wouldn't say, we were in, she says, I told you they were all right. (laughter) So, that's the kind of a life we lived.

EM: You know, in a way, that's even though it's stricter, it makes it when you do have an opportunity to go, it makes it more fun, so to speak.

AB: Yes. Well, it's the excitement of doing those things that you are not supposed to do too. You know.

EM: Yes.

AB: But, it wasn't too bad. We used to be able to go early in the evening on the... like when it was heavy snow. We used to get the miners' wagons and we would go for a hay ride. And we could do those things. We were allowed to do those. But we had to be back at a certain time, you know. But we had to make our own fun. There was nothing made for us in those days. Like there is for children.... look what they get nowadays. All this recreation, all this... things that's made.... and they are still not happy and satisfied. We had more fun making it ourselves, And as we grew older, you know, we used to get up and make surprise parties on each other and... all that, you know. I can remember lots of things that we had all kinds of fun....

EM: So, there were fewer games to play for girls, because boys could always play soccer and things like that. What sport were girls allowed to play?

AB: I don't remember.

EM: I don't think, there were any. then, were there?

AB: I don't remember. We did play ball a little bit, you know. But there was no- no teams, or anything like that that I can remember.

(Talking overlapping)

AB: Like... Easter time, we used to go out rolling eggs and things like that. And that's about all. That was one thing, we always did. And then another thing, when it came to Fox Day, we always had big barn fires.
BM: You celebrated Fox Day?

AB: Oh yes, very much so.

BM: That was one of the very few places in Canada they really actually...

AB: Yes.

BM: And they still celebrate it a bit.

AB: Yes.

BM: Still keep the tradition of that.

AB: Yes. We used to have quite a barn fire. It was quite a night, that was.

BM: Yes. Did you ever get married?

AB: Hmm?

BM: You got married to Mr.

AB: I married into the Bryant family. You see, well. I married everybody in town... they became 46 cousins...

BM: Ya. So, when you married your husband, you became related to almost everybody in town?

AB: Ya. Just about. 46th cousin to everybody

BM: Was your husband a coal miner also?

AB: No, he worked, when I first met him, he worked on a tug boat, that used to haul logs around from here to the mill in Westminster.

BM: Was that... was he... I assume that they had social divisions in those days. You know, like society, the high class, the low class, the middle class?

AB: Yes. The Townsite... there was... they started building those better homes on the Townsite. Not very far, you know. Few blocks, that's about all. They were supposed to be the VIX'es. And we down the Southend, we were supposed to be the lower class, you know. (chuckle)

BM: And was your husband being related to a lot of people in town. Was he up higher or something like that, or better family to marry into, sort to speak...

AB: Well, he, he didn't act that way. We were all friends together.
We didn't have much class distinction to bother with. Some of the...
like my husband's mother, for instance, coming out here was out of
her line entirely, you know. And of course, I think, with time she
thought perhaps of the family having beneath them, this or the
other, but it was never held against us, you know.
BM: Humhum.
AB: But... the same thing that... killed the first white woman that
was born here, Robinson's wife...
BM: Ya.
AB: You see, the... they are used to.... they are brought up to have
servants and all this and when they come out here they are down amongst
the Indians and the fighting at that time too, you know. When they came
cut, they weren't... just docile, the Indians. You know, what I mean
is... the white were so different, that was more than they could take,
a lot of them.
BM: Humhum. What do... do you remember anything about the Indians?
Did they ever... were they ever... were they fairly wild when you first
came?
AB: Oh, no. They weren't.... No, no. There was quite a big Reserve
down on the waterfront, you know, on the South end there. I remember
the... mostly the... potlaches (chuckle). We youngsters used to sneak
down there... and tried to look in to see what they did, you know.
And we're very scary about it but we still used to go. And they keep
on, cause we couldn't stay too long, we weren't allowed to be out
after a certain hour, and they'd keep it up practically all night,
you know.
BM: What do you remember about those incidences when you snuck to see
what they were doing? What was going on?
AB: Well, they used to have great big sheds, great big long houses,
and the middle of the roof was open, you know. And they'd a great big fire
there, and... they evidently had their... what they were giving to
various ones, piled around the outside and then they would do all their
fancy dancing around, and the other Indians would be way around... you know, see the ground. But the regalia and the stuff that they had, you know, ... it was terrifying sometimes.

BM: Humhum. How did they dress?

AB: What I mean is, they have blankets over them, and then they had head dresses. Some of them were terrible... scary, you know.

BM: Did they have totem poles all over the place?

AB: Down there? Totem poles, you know, those....

BM: Oh, yes, they used to have some.

BM: Did they have any problems with other Indian tribes coming in there to...

AB: No. Never had any of that.

It was, when we came out.... But that was in evidence when the first Bryant came out and Robinson, you know.

BM: Yes.

AB: You had to watch, you know. There was the Qualicum Beach tribe, you know at that time, and the Nanaimo tribe, and then down below Cowichan down there they used to have a little trouble. But we never had any trouble here.

BM: Ya, that was pretty fortunate.

I heard somewhere that the Qualicum tribe massacre...

AB: Ya.

BM: They just came and obliterate the whole entire village...

AB: Ya.

BM: ... just for the reason... was that a sister tribe to the Qualicum tribe had murdered one of their tribes. So, they took it out on a weaker tribe of the association, you know, that was perfectly acceptable.

AB: I had a ... thing that they wore all beaded, you know.

BM: Oh, yes.

AB: And it had woven things to it but it got a little moth eaten. I gave it to the ... museum. And that came from the Qualicum tribe to Cornelius Bryant. I was a... he used to go and try and each
to them, you know, and I helped him out. He was a...

BM: He was a preacher?

AB: Yes. He used to go to Fort Rupert and that was on the Island here too, you know.

BM: That was a very wild place, Fort Rupert.

AB: Yes. He used to go there. And he travelled to Prince Rupert and places like that. He's been all around the coast here at that time, you know. From there right from Sioux (?)

even in Vancouver. He just travelled around as a missionary. He picked up a few things. But I have them to the museum some time ago. He also had a large photograph of the ... you, those great big square poles...

BM: Oh...

AB: I don't know if you ever saw them, that went up to the wheels of the shaft, Number 1 shaft.

BM: Oh, I think, I know what you are talking about.

AB: Yes. Ya, they are about that square...

BM: Oh, ya.

AB: And I had a picture of them, right in front of the old Salvation Army, it's improved now, but it is the old look of it, you know. Right there, and the drugstore was there. Six horses bringing it down, cryin' to get it around that corner to take it to the shaft.

BM: Oh, yes.

AB: I'm not sure, whether that was after the fire of the shaft or whether it was the original or when they rebuild it. Bit... it's in the museum. I gave it to the museum.

BM: Yes. There is one thing I want to ask you. Do you ever remember the little wooly dogs that the Indians used to have?

AB: Yes. White ones mostly. Yes.

BM: And they are supposed to be extinct now.

AB: Yes. They are supposed to be part Northern dog, weren't they?

BM: Something like that. It apparently was a very rare breed of dog
that the Indians bred.
AB: Yes.
BM: Just to make their woolen type blankets...
AB: Yes.
BM: They had woolen type of hair.
AB: Yes. I just remember seeing them. I had not seein' them for years. But I do remember when we first came. I tell you how I came to see them too. The... They used to come around selling salmon. We could buy a salmon like that for twenty-five cents.
BM: Humhum.
AB: You see. And then when there was a big family they used to come and beg for your cast off rags and they made rugs out of them. I have a... I have a ... Indian basket that was given to me because I not only saved mother's rags but I begged them off other people, so that this lady that used to come all the time, we used to call her Mary Peanuts, (chuckle)... indistinct.
BM: Oh, yes. That is a very nice basket. You kept it in really good condition. Yes, I really have taken good care of it.
BM: It is sort of ingenious the way they lived.
AB: Yes.
BM: You know a lot of people underestimate their intelligence, sometimes.
AB: Yes. Well, I don't, because, .. now recently (chuckle) the... women, the B.C. Women's Institute has a contest going on for doing baskets, you know, for basket making. They wanted us to make one out of our own material here.
BM: Oh, yes.
AB: Of course, I hadn't been well and my patience has been not too good. But I have been making baskets and been interested in baskets for the last 45 years. or more. And I've been teaching it all along.
BM: Oh, yes.
AB: On and off all the time. And I've tried ... I've been trying to make a basket out a local grasses or whatever you can get.
BM: What would that be made off? Bull rushes or something?
AB: No. Most of this is made out of the inside of the bark.
BM: Oh ya.
AB: You know what I mean?
BM: Inside of what tree? Cedar?
AB: Well, cedar or alder or something like that.
BM: That is amazing.
AB: And, of course, they had to have, the heavy piece, I don't know what they use underneath here, I couldn't tell you that.
BM: Do you still (remember) the name of this... lady... was Mary. Did she ever use to wear white people's clothes?
AB: Never.
BM: Never. Because an other lady, there was an other Indian called Mary, and she always used to run around wearing a conglomaration of white women's clothes but she would never know how to wear them. She would wear the dress first and then the petticoat and the corsett on last.
AB: Oh, I don't remember that...
BM: Yes. And,,, this other lady, Elizabeth Freeman, her mother used to sit there and say:"Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary." And she would take her inside the house and put it on her right. She used to run around in these high, high heeled shoes, and she says, she just liked white women's clothes. She was a character.
AB: I don't remember that.
BM: I'm really glad that you mentioned that woolen dogs , because according what has been written about it...
AB: Yes.
BM: It's
AB: They weren't very large dogs, either.
BM: No, just about the size of a poodle.
AB: Yes. That's right. I remember them. I remember them.

BM: That's good. Because according to what's been done, there is only three people that remember seeing them.

AB: Yes.

BM: That is really important. Because it used to be a rare breed that was only on the Island.

AB: Yes. And it seems to me, at that time, I heard that too. You don't think about things for a long time, it has to come back to you. I do remember the dogs. We had, as you said, you were talking about girls' jobs, you know, getting jobs. You couldn't get a job only, like working for... house work for somebody, you know. And, when I was... I guess, I was almost fifteen, I went to work for Sandy Robins who was the superintendent of the mines here, as an aid. I worked in there. And he had an Indian woman that did the washing and an Indian man in the garden, and I saw quite a bit of the Indians then. They all dressed... now the men, gardeners, they dressed pretty well like our own miners of that time, you know. But the women, they didn't dress in real Indian clothes, but the made them themselves, or probably made them of somebody's cast offs... But they knew how to put them on anyway. But I saw quite a bit of the Indians there.

BM: Do you remember any other ethnic groups that sort of stood out, you know, like the Chinese and Indians, like the Finns, maybe, or something like that, or the Italians....?

AB: No. There wasn't too much Italians here at that time that I remember, not at our end of town anyway. We had a lot of English people down the Southend, a terrible lot, Scotch yes, Scotch people, and English people.

BM: What do you remember about the weather in those days? Was it considerably colder in the winters?

AB: At times. I remember one time that it froze over here, you know. In this place here, it froze over. You couldn't go on to it, but it had frozen. But... They said that was the first time in many years
When my dad first came out here it used to be colder. He said, it was frozen over that they could walk on it, at one time.

EM: A lot of people said, right up to the 1950ies it was colder in the winters.

AB: Oh, yes. We are having milder winters. In fact, the weather seems to be just turned over some how or another, now, to what it used to be. They had lots of snow.

EM: Yes. Humhum. What... did you ever go to bars or things like that? Or were you not allowed to do that? You know, the beer parlours?

AB: Oh, my Goodness, Gracious, no.

EM: No.

AB: Gracious! Do you know, my father had us all so well trained that we would hardly dare take a breath when we passed the beer parlour of fear we got contaminated. That's true. In my earlier years, as I got older and, you know, and more into my teens, I seemed to be getting to use my own head a little bit, you know, then. And not only that, he was getting more climatized in getting away from the mid Victorian a bit too, that's helped a lot, you see. When we first came out, he was so mid Victorian, we couldn't do anything.

EM: When you were into your teens I suppose, that you started to date? What would your father do if you were to go out on a date or something like that. I mean, what was the hassle you would have to go to? I mean, what were you supposed to do? What time were you supposed to be home or something like that?

AB: Oh, the time I was supposed to be home was the biggest thing.

EM: Yes.

AB: And who I went with was another thing (chuckle).

EM: So, your father would have to see the boy first before you went out with him.

AB: He'd have to know at least who he was.
BM: Can I ask you a question: Do you remember anything about the Red Light District on Fraser Street?

AB: Yes, I do.

BM: Could you say what the public's attitude towards it was? Was it...

AB: Well, I just don't remember the grown up attitude to it. But I do remember the teenage attitude. Some of us girls when we were at John Shaw when we were getting used to goin' to town once in a while, we think, we were very brave if we run down Fraser Street, as hard as we could go to get up. (Laughter).

BM: Yes.

AB: That was our attitude toward it. It was an evil place. And we were bait each other to run through, you know. Sort of made something that you didn't understand and made fun of it.

AB: Well...

BM: You know.

AB: ... It was an evil place and we were not supposed to be there, so we run through it as fast as we could go, and then we would come out of the old gass works, you know, that was across ... the Road, well right now where the Villa is.

BM: Oh, yes.

AB: Was it the Villa or the Tally Ho? Tally Ho. There was some old gass works there, and if we had a cold, we used to go down there and we, wee air, and it would help the cold.

BM: Really?

AB: Our parents used to take us down there when we were younger, you know.

BM: Amazing.
Mrs. Ann Bryant interviewed by Bernard McNicholl, Friday 13th.

Information concerning the 1912-13 Coal strike.

Mrs. Bryant was expecting at the time and remembers the strike. Her father at that time was Union Secretary. One day the miners started to march. They first group came in from South Wellington and they went into Harvard's store and removed all the guns. Then the men marched back to South Wellington and put this man on the boat (don't know who the man was). The next day there were riots at number One. Her father went down to see what all the noise was about. Her father despised violence. At that time the militia had arrived and arrested all the men including her father, who went down to stop it. So Mrs. Bryant and her family had to visit her father in jail. It was very humiliating for her family. Mrs. Bryant who was expecting went into labour due to the stress. She had to go to a friends house not far away going through crowds of men carrying guns. Her baby was called a strike baby, there were two born during the beginning of the strike and hers was one of them.

She remembers that prior to this her father one night dressed up in womens clothes to go to South Wellington to put this mine boss on a boat to Vancouver so the miners would not kill him.

Many families split up. Some borrowed money from the Salvation Army and went back to the old country. Others went to Australia. Some families still won't speak to each other to this day. Also her father refused to take strike pay and as a result lost his house.

BM.