INDUSTRY, LABOUR AND THE PROFESSIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Panelists

Chair: Derek Reimer -- Head, Sound and Moving Image Division, PABC

Ken Drushka -- author, Against Wind and Weather

Lynne Bowen -- author, Boss Whistle, M.A. (History), University of Victoria

Maryla Waters -- Project Co-ordinator, University of Victoria, LLB, University of London, Doctor of Jurisprudence, University of Chicago

"Introduction"

by Derek Reimer

Nine years ago when the founding meeting of the Canadian Oral History Association took place at Simon Fraser University I also chaired a session similar in many ways in terms of its title and general direction to this one. It was called "Oral History in B.C. Studies." That session and a number of other sessions at that conference emphasized the great promise that oral history had for Canadian studies. It was a conference that was full of enthusiasm for the future of oral history, but it was a conference that because of the time--oral history being fairly new in Canada--was a little light in terms of the accomplishments we were able to point to. In planning for this session, I have been struck by the thought that this session could not possibly have taken place, a session where we are able to have three people talk to us about a major book, a major legal history undertaking, and a local history project organized by a group of retired miners, such as the Coal Tyee Project. There just were not projects at a sufficient level of completion. So it gives me a lot of pleasure to chair this session where we can see not just the promise that oral history holds for the study of British Columbia but where we can see some really substantial results.

"B.C. Legal History Project"

by Maryla Waters

I'd like to begin with a few words about the scope of our project. The full title is the "B.C. Legal History Collection Project"--no oral in it at all. When it started, very tentatively in the summer of 1978, by Professor William Neilson of the University of

Victoria, we weren't really conducting much more than a feasibility study. We were wondering where the money could come from. We were wondering where the whole impetus could come from. I think the three organizations which helped produce the project have added something very important to what it has become. It's housed at the University of Victoria which provides us with an academic background. It is funded by the Law Foundation, which adjudicates on various legal projects and decides where they are going to give their money. Because it is a professional body and because the board is a changing board and reflects the profession throughout the province, I think we are kept on our toes. We realize that we have to reflect very faithfully the different aspects of the profession as it exists and as it existed in this province. Finally, we draw very heavily, and particularly in the very early days, on the experience and advice of the Provincial Archives.

Now, as the name implies, the project is confined to the history of B.C., which is a very short history, as we know. We can almost go back and touch hands with the first people who worked here in law on horseback and so on. I've interviewed a gentleman who's now 96. He can remember the very early days in the administration of law here. Indeed you don't have to go very far up north to meet conditions which are not so dissimilar from those of a hundred years ago.

Now to legal historians, to whom I have to speak more often than to pure historians, what I do can barely be classified as history, because we do not trace the development of ideas, of doctrines, of procedures and so on; we don't look at writs and growth of criminology. We work on the basis, which I think is probably common to all of us here, that what happened yesterday is history and deserves to be recorded.

I'm a recent British Columbian myself. I find that the history of this place is as spectacular as its scenery. We're so close, as I said, to the beginning. Let me just give you two examples. Former Chief Justice Wilson, who is one of the most respected lawyers in this country, as a thinker in jurisprudence, as a superb law-giver when he sat on the court, started practising in a very pioneer-like fashion in the Kootenays. Mr. Justice Cody, the 96 year old gentleman just referred to, came from Cape Breton at the turn of the century, travelling in a colonist car. He established a practice in east end Vancouver. He gradually climbed his way up the ladder and became, again, one of the most respected lawyers on the Court of Appeal, had a wealth of information and idealism to give us, from very, very simple beginnings.

As I mentioned a moment ago, there is no word "oral" in the title of our project. The reason for that is that when it was started, the plan was basically to assist the development of research and writing in the field of legal history by identifying for researchers the existing archival materials and by providing access to them. Because we were a law faculty and very concerned about our students in the summer, we thought that sort of backhandedly we could slip in a little bit of summer student employment. And then someone said, "Well, it would be icing on the cake but it would really be very nice if we could also interview some lawyers who had made a major contribution to the development of law in this province," and we interviewed them. This was the stage at which I came in to do a feasibility study, as more or less a volunteer at that point. It's interesting that the only part of the project which has survived to this day, for a whole variety of reasons, is the oral history--and survived and developed though it's still one woman and a secretary.

Let me tell you at this point that I think we've completed around 30 interviews. I haven't added up how many hours of tape there is, but I would say

we're getting on for about 200 hours of tape at this stage.

We are constantly inspired by the present rich holdings of the Provincial Archives. One of the things we felt was that these holdings consisting of debates, speeches and so on were a little unfair to what we thought was just a superb legal profession, because it spreads its tentacles into so many different fields: politics, law practise, administration and so on. So we wanted not only to provide biographical material. And I think the value of a project such as ours can only really be seen 50 years from now, when these people are dead and gone. Future historians will think, "My word, I can actually listen to this man while I write about him." But also we wanted to show the range of careers for which the law provides an ideal training.

Most of the people that we have interviewed have been people who have got to the top. They are the former Lieutenant-Governors, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the first woman to be articled in British Columbia, a number of judges of course, a number of leading practitioners. We tried to do some country lawyers, some pioneers. The reason we haven't gone further into this is because of finances. It's just too expensive to travel very much outside the centres.

I selected these people by canvassing the profession. We do have an advisory committee which helps me to select among them. We could go on forever, because, of course, every time an interview is finished somebody else retires. We always look for people who are at the point of retirement, simply because we take up so much of their time. One person told me this was a full-time job for three months, to prepare for his interview and I'm not surprised. He read through all his cases and went through family papers and so on.

Our initial approach is very gentle. We've had, I think we can say, ninety-nine percent success. We invited them to tea and lunch and that sort of thing, and it works quite well. I then do a lot of basic research, then go into the preliminary interview, where nothing is recorded but we discuss how the interview will be run and a possible choice of interviewer, because I don't do all the interviews. Very often we chose a contemporary. That was how the project was originally set up. For a number of reasons, we are switching away from that, and I'm doing more and more interviews myself. It just takes too much time to brief people.

But above all [at this preliminary meeting] we discuss the issue of confidentiality. Most of the people that I come to talk to say to me: "Well, look, I can't tell you names. I was instrumental in this decision. I can't tell you how we arrived at it, what my brother judges said, and so on." So we will discuss it in detail. In some cases we put a hold on the interviews. In many cases, when they gain confidence in the way that this interview is going to be conducted, their guard drops and they do tell much more than they had originally intended to. But in all cases this is an issue on which we have to spend a great deal of time. I can't overemphasize the importance of this. I take past interviews to them which have been released. I take copies of the releases from the Archives. We do emphasize to them the whole time that they must never feel that they are going to be pushed beyond what they want to tell us. We are not being investigative. We are trying to give as true, as clear and as individual a picture as we possibly can. Every interview is very different. I feel that my whole effort goes into learning from them what they want to talk about.

I was talking about this project last night, and I was asked how much family background we give to the interview of these people, and I said it varies tremendously. If someone said to me, "Oh, yes, my parents are both Scandinavian but I don't really known much about my

family," for example, then that is all that I will record in the interview, because I feel that is the importance that it's held for them. But if he pulls out a whole lot of scrapbooks and starts showing me his family background and tells me that his great-uncle had been a lawyer then I'll spend a great deal of time going into his family background, because to me that is part of the picture of the man concerned.

Most of the research that is done is done by talking to people. In one case, to give you an idea--and this is unusual--I interviewed 17 people before I actually came to interview the main person that I was going to talk to. I then prepared not a set of questions but an outline of all the main points that I wanted to raise with them. We found questions terribly confining: the whole thing became stilted, so we dropped them. The outline works well for us. It tends to be very detailed. It goes between me and the interviewee and the interviewer, if there is one. We arrive at a point where we are all happy with it, and then we plunge into it; we don't go any further. We stress the legal, as I said, but we will go as far outside the legal as necessary. Certainly things like religion, moral values in the house and so on we would consider very important, particularly in the case of judges, because it might well affect their work.

When we've got the tape ready we prepare a transcript with tremendous care, and that transcript is vetted by the interviewee too. Following the Archive's advice, we tell them over and over again: "Please don't change things. By all means put a hold if you must. Change punctuation, spellings and so on. Don't change major things but do feel happy with it." We haven't yet had one transcript which the interviewee was not happy with, but sometimes he felt he wished he had said this and the other, and we will add an appendix in that case. At this point we go to them and say to them: "Are you ready to release it?" The Release Form is signed and the tapes and the transcript are available to researchers, both in the archives and at the University of Victoria.

To sum up, I like to ask myself what the future holds for projects such as this. Now it is funded from year to year and therefore it could be discontinued, I suppose at any time. Because of the very happy relationship we've set up with the Archives, I don't feel it would be a tragedy, though it would be a pity, because we might miss one or two people. But it could always be taken up again at some future stage and continued.

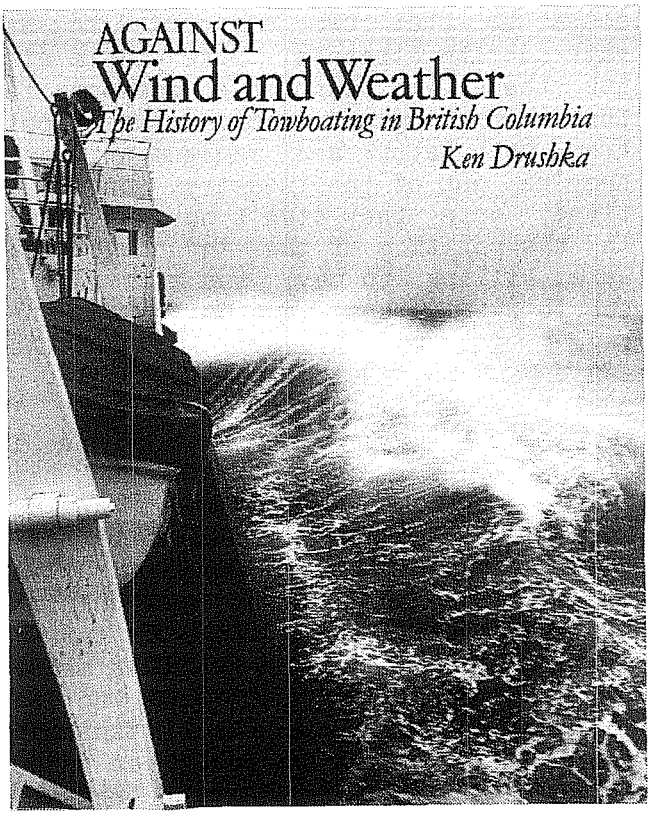
"A History of Tow-boating in British Columbia"

by Ken Drushka

When I started I never really had any knowledge of the towboat industry, or very little. And I didn't have much of the sense of the book I was to write. The sense of the book came out of the taping, and that was what began to impress me about the use and the misuse of oral history. As I started seeing the transcripts a number of things became clear to me. One, was that the oral history component of this was going to provide the colour and the texture and the feel of the industry. That was the first thing. Gradually though it became clear it was going to provide a lot more than that. Because what the oral history was doing as I did interview, after interview, (and I did some 40 with most of the people who had been involved with the development of the industry) was that the oral history was in many ways in contradiction to the orthodox history of the industry. With the towboat industry there was a commonly accepted history and then there was the things that everybody involved kept referring

back to and talking about. In the case of the towboat industry there were two interesting aspects. One was the orthodox view of the industry: that it had started out with a bunch of small operators who had been taken over by multinational corporations leaving two companies in control of 90 to 95 percent of the industry with big new boats. And this represented progress. But everybody I talked to, including the people who were the heads of these corporations, who had any roots in the industry, thought that this was a deplorable situation. And that although there was a lot of good things that came out of the so-called progress in the industry, there were a lot of bad things about it too.

The other thing was that there was a phase that the industry went through where some very irresponsible things happened. Simply put, a lot of very poor boats were built during the 1950s and a lot of people died in those boats. This was an embarrassing phase for the industry a lot of people preferred not to talk about. I should go back a bit here and say that this book was funded by the towboat industry. However, they had signed a contract saying that I had the final editorial say. So they could not stop or control the content of the book. If they would have been able to, they would have stopped the book at that point, because they were on the verge of calling their lawyers. This was the really only tricky point of it. To me it was a critical point of it, because for anybody who had worked in the industry, the validity and the authenticity of the book and of the history meant that this aspect of the industry had to be mentioned. To settle the argument I said, "Okay, I'll go and talk to a guy who is retired." He was the former president of Seaspan--the biggest towing company on the coast. "He'll set me straight on this." I said, "I'm willing to talk to anybody, but I'll write what I'll write." So I went and we talked of a number of things. He had read the



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Vancouver, B.C.

first draft of the book and in the end he turned to me and said, "The one thing that I would really like to talk to you about is this business about the boats that were built during the 1950s, the so-called tin cans or the hotrods of the industry." He said, "I just want you to know that I think that you are absolutely correct and that that was the most deplorable thing that ever happened in the industry, and that is an essential part of this book, and it's essential that that be stated."

I think if anybody would have attempted to write a history of the industry from documented sources without oral history, they would not have been able to include particularly those two things. Particularly the part about the

boats that sunk with their crews, because there was no evidence of that. There were hearings and investigations but the documents that came out tended to say that nothing happened. Sure people died but there were reasonable reasons for that happening and so on. But people from both labour and management, once they're out of the industry, once retired, once they didn't have any stake in the politics of the industry, they were willing to say, yes that was a terrible thing that went on. And they regret it, and it's over with and they don't want to see it happening again.

I found some limitations though, in using oral history for that. One is that it only covers a part of the historical period of the industry. You can only go back so far and then everybody's dead. Essentially if you're talking about industrial history, oral history is relevant from about the 1920s on. I found one person who was 95 whose memory in some areas was fairly good who had gone back a little earlier. Basically if you're writing a history of an industry you got to start from the beginning and you're not going to find people. So in a way it tends to create an odd book.

By the time I came to write the book my conclusion was that what I had to write was really the connecting sectors between the transcripts of the various people that I had interviewed. They had told most of the story and what I needed to do as a writer was to provide some connecting commentary. So I wrote that. I had transcripts made as soon as I did the interviews and then I could look at them.

I wound up with transcripts that would have totaled about 150,000 words. The book was supposed to be 100,000 words. So I phoned up the editors of the publishing house and said, "What do you want me to do, do you want me to edit all this stuff down, cut it out, or do you want to see all of it and be in on the selection process for this because it's all good, it's all usable." So it was a question of judgment. She said, "Send it all down and we'll have a look at it." So I sent the manuscript down with the transcripts in a big box and then I went down to see the publisher who had just come out of the hospital from having an operation. And he said, "I read this and it's pretty good, but it seems to me you've left out quite a bit. It's only about 50,000 words where this was going to be an 80 to 100,000 word book. Where's the rest?" I said, "Where are the transcripts?" "What are you talking about?" I said, "There's a box full of stuff." And his face turned white and he went crawling under the desk and pulled out the box of edited transcripts. He said, "You mean this?" And I said, "Yes, that. That's the book, this is just the connecting stuff here." Well at that point they almost didn't publish the book. They though you couldn't mix these things together. In fact they'd sooner not have oral history at all, because it was a rather odd new kind of thing. Mixing it with texts that I'd written was, no way. So we fought that one back and forth. They said, "You've got to write the book, and you can just insert this stuff." "No." Finally they did put an editor to work on it, who was a good editor and was able to pull it together and make the two fit.

One of the most interesting uses I made of the oral history techniques was to sit down with somebody who had a picture collection and go through those pictures with the person numbering the pictures and mentioning the numbers on the tape. Keying the pictures into the index of the tape and having him explain what the pictures were about. It starts in his mind all sorts of things that he had forgotten. It tended to make things very precise because rather than just talking out of his memory he was looking at something specific. A picture of a boat basically is what these things were. That was very useful.

Another thing that I did before I talked to the old timers in the industry, since I knew very little about the

industry, I went to two or three people who are active in the industry and asked them to give me a full explanation of how the industry operates today. I wanted that so I wouldn't be a complete dud and ask stupid questions. That worked very well.

One thing that didn't work at all was group sessions. I got conned into going to a session of the Pioneer's Club of Canadian Merchant Service Guild, which is the retired tug boat captains, mates and engineers. They said, "Oh, we have a meeting the first Wednesday of every month at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Come, there's everybody there. We have a business meeting and then we sit around and talk about the old days." And I thought, well this will be great. So I went with my tape recorder. They had the business meeting, 10 minutes later somebody moved an adjournment, they all got up and walked out, 35 of these people, everyone of them carrying a bottle of scotch or rum or rye sat it down on the table and they all started talking about the old days. And nobody left until all of this liquor was gone. I tried listening to the tape of that and some of the tapes I made there are useless. I did meet a few interesting people but that was all the session was good for.

I suppose the main use I made of oral history in the book was to validate or authenticate my perceptions of the history of the industry which I had obtained largely from the people that I interviewed, but also a variety of other sources like the Archives and their historical documents. That did raise in my mind an ethical question. Basically, are these tapes and these transcripts sort of raw material that I can use, that I could pick and chose from? Everybody contradicted everybody else so, essentially, I could make oral history say what I wanted it to say within certain bounds of course. There was an ethical question and its one that I still haven't resolved, I suppose some academic oral historians might say, "Well, you're looking for an objective reality and you make sure you get it." Well, that's fine if you're going to tuck it away in a file cabinet some place but not if it's going to go into a book.

I suppose the most vivid illustration to me of the value of oral history was something I came across when I was doing the tugboat book that really had nothing to do with the towboat industry. In the realm of industrial history there exists the C.D. Orchard Collection. In the 1960s C.D. Orchard, who had been the chief forester of the B.C. Forest Service for quite a number of years, was hired to do a forest history project. I think he spent a year or more on it. One of the things he did was go around with a dictaphone or some kind of machine and talk to about 40 people who were prominent in the forest industry at that time. That collection of tapes (and the transcripts were made from them by the Hansard Reporting Service) is one of the most incredible collections of information, data, and insight into how an industry functions that exists, particularly since he documented the whole thing. Basically, he ransacked the forest service files for what he considered to be important documents that I presume he thought would be more safe outside the forest service in institutions like the B.C. Archives or UBC. If you go through Orchard's tapes--particularly his tapes--and the documentation that go along with it, it requires a complete rewriting of orthodox forest history in B.C. That impressed me very much. The techniques of oral history and the practice of oral history can go an awful long way to breaking through the orthodox historical point of view and getting a little bit closer to what really went on.

"The Coalminers of Vancouver Island Remember"

by Lynne Bowen

Four years ago a group of mostly senior citizens began work under an inspirational lady named Myrtle Bergren, a senior herself, and author of Tough Timber a history of the I.W.A. Their object was to collect memories of Vancouver Island coalminers and this they did. Within the short time of eight months they had interviewed 110 retired coalminers. Then a car accident took Myrtle Bergren's life. The group ultimately asked me to continue where she had left off. They also hired a playwright to dramatize their story for the stage and the result was the play called We Too which ran for three weeks to sold out houses, and the book Boss Whistle.

I mention the play to illustrate one of the other uses of oral history to which this group, the Coal Tyee Society has put their recorded memories. Because their aim was to tell as many people as possible what coalminers lives and struggles were like they've encouraged me to speak on their behalf on radio and television, at schools, service clubs and at book stores--literally wherever two or three are gathered together. Readings of the book have been especially well received. Everyone seems to enjoy being read to and when we use actors to read the miners words the audiences like it even more. The actors read direct quotes from the book. Throughout the book the smaller print are direct quotes from the miners.

The decision to use this format came when I realized that often the miners could say it much better than I could. How could any writer improve on this.

> "I've been down in the graveyard there several times and seen a lot of the gravestones of the people who were killed. The funerals were mostly on foot. Ladysmith has a band and it played for every funeral. They walked slow, and they went and they picked one up and they took him to the grave, buried him, then went back and picked up the next one. It was at least two days. I still know the tune it played, it's kind of eerie. Sometimes it rings in my ears even yet."

The use of direct quotes has however been the source of the single most often asked question about Boss Whistle. Why did I not identify each speaker in the text. This decision was made after great thought and was based on the following considerations. First, the statements in the book are the opinion of the speaker and as such will likely differ with many other people's opinions. Anonymity protects the speakers from having to defend what they have said. Second, there were several people who could not be interviewed because of the press of time. I hope that they will be able to identify with some of the anonymous speakers and in that we feel that they too had a part in telling the story. Third, placing a name beside each quotation would, I felt interrupt the flow of the text. In order, however, to guard the integrity of the book all interviewees are listed at the back of the book. Furthermore, there is a quote by quote list identifying each speaker on file at the Provincial Archives of B.C. in Victoria. This list is with the tape recordings now part of the Archive's permanent collection and is available to anyone who wishes to check my interpretations or use of the material.

The audiences at the readings have, as I said, been enthusiastic. This not only fulfills the Coal Tyee Society's aim, it fulfills mine. My aim is to help Canadians read and enjoy their own history. I put it to you that oral history in all its manifestations is uniquely suited to turn Canada on to its own history. By using the "people" story we can reach every person in the

country. But the story must be true as well as interesting. It must be based on facts which have been checked, and it must be written using valid historical research techniques.

The user of oral history is faced with three large tasks. First, the gathering of information by interviewing and consulting the sources. Second, the process of organizing that information, and third, the writing. Today I would like to concentrate my remarks on the first task, that of gathering the information. In a relative sense I am an inexperienced interviewer having only done a handful of interviews myself. I am however, an experienced user of interviews, having read, re-read, catalogued, checked and dismembered 130 hours of transcribed interviews. During this process I was able to see certain problems that can arise and, with the lofty view of the critic who picks apart what others have done, I made the following observations.

The people who did do the Coal Tyee interviews ranged all the way from experts to inept novices. In order to ease the way of the novices a list of questions was prepared. But this seemed to restrict the interview. The inexperienced person being so preoccupied with the questions that topics were not pursued when they were brought up. The novice and expert alike were at the mercy of two or three highly educated people who were interviewed. Because these people were accustomed to organizing their thoughts there words came out sounding like holy writ. It is difficult to challenge a statement that sounds logical and well delivered.

The phrase, "second chance history" is one that was used at the oral history conference in 1974 by George Cook. The golden opportunity to tell the story the way the subject would have liked it to happen, was seen as a great weakness of oral history and one of which I was very aware. Let's propose two techniques which can lessen the ill effects of second chance history. The first is one

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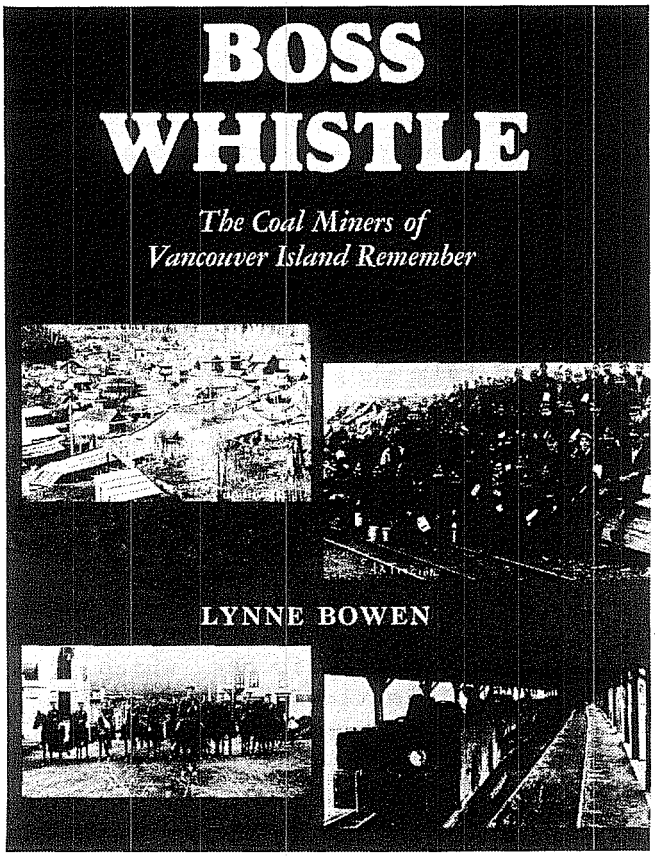

I used in Boss Whistle. The sheer numbers of interviews were very useful to me for I was able to gain several different renderings of the most controversial events. For some I was able to compare stories with newspaper and scholarly accounts. And thus arrive at a judgment at what actually happened.

For others there was no obvious correct version. Like eyewitnesses at an accident each observer saw something different. So, I included them all. The most notable example was that of the riot at Extension Mines on August 13, 1913. A pitched battle was fought between the strike breakers situated in the mine tunnel on one side and on the other side the strikers located on a ridge overlooking the mine yard. Details vary depending on which side was telling the story, of course, but there were also discrepancies between people on the same side. Were there guns? Which side had them? How many men were involved? Had the riot been planned in advance? If

so, by which side? Who started it? Who was shot? Who was killed? An incident which happened after the book was published will illustrate how impossible it would have been to resolve these issues. One of the most vociferous advocates of the union cause was Ellen Greenwell. At the time of the riot a 19 year old girl from the large Greenwell family, and steeped in union rhetoric, she stoutly maintained that the strikers had only baseball bats, no guns. I was a guest on a radio talk show in Nanaimo when one caller told me she was from a union family, that she'd heard these stories all her life, and that the strikers definitely had guns. I asked her the name of her family, and she said, "Greenwell."

The second technique I propose which would help lessen the propensity for second hand history is one which I'm using in the interviews for my new book. Two elderly gentlemen whom I had previously interviewed individually, consented to join me on a tour of old mine sites. As the three of us drove along, each man telling me stories, the others would either confirm or deny or modify what the first had said. Not a foolproof method of gaining the truth but definitely an incentive to good honest recall. The same tour taught me another interviewing technique which may interest you. It's really a technique for stimulating memory. My 2 old miner friends riding with me in my car jogged each other's memories constantly. One story told led quickly to another. Anecdotes flew fast and furious. The combined effect of being together and seeing country-side which they had not seen for years brought back incidents long buried. Added to this was the invaluable affect upon me as a writer of seeing actual sites even though much altered, where the event I would write about took place. Altogether a very exciting experience.

--Related to this is another technique I used in Boss Whistle, that of reading each chapter to other miners whom I chose because of the clearness of their descriptions on their tapes. I hasten to add that this so-called "technique" was not pre-meditated. I originally intended this exercise to check my facts and the general mood of the book with the men who had lived through the period. But I became aware that it was also producing some additional oral history of a particularly rich kind. As I read the rough chapters to Jack Atkinson and Jock Gilmore, they gave me new quotations for the finished book. Following a number of excerpts describing what it was like to work the longwall, a method of mining used in most seams where the men must work on their bellies all day, Jock said: "You would not catch me working the longwall, crawling on your belly all the time. That's for snakes." And in the section on the Extension riot after the description of the burning and looting at strike breakers' houses, Jock said: "I saw one man playing the piano with an axe."

As you can see, I used the miners over and over again, showing pictures to them, awakening more forgotten stories as well. I feel that the accessibility of many of them is very valuable. To be able to consult one's oral history sources over and over again is highly desirable.

I used two other sources of a somewhat more formal nature. First, quotes from newspapers are, I believe, useful if you use them carefully. There is an immediacy about newspaper accounts written during or after the event that is very helpful in establishing a mood. The writer must, of course, keep in mind all the pitfalls which attend the use of interviews done in the heat of the moment by a journalist with a deadline to meet.

A second source of somewhat more formal oral history is trial testimony. I used the transcripts of the preliminary hearings held three weeks after the 1916 riots. Testimony to be given so close to the event means that the details are clearer, especially when the

detail is related under oath and is subject to cross examination by an imposing attorney as well as the majesty of the court which surely help witnesses to tell the truth. The disadvantages of using trial testimony must be borne in mind, however. Emotions still run high so close to the event, and the presence in the courtroom of enemies and of friends can color a witness's story. The court stenographer replaces the tape recorder in the 1913 court room. Therefore there will be some immediate editing and also a peculiar practice which has been noted before by other historians when dealing with foreigners speaking English. The stenographer, perhaps of necessity, emphasizes the speech of these people, making it read as though perfect, though stilted English were spoken. In one incident, quoted in Boss Whistle, the stenographer was not consistent however. A Chinese storeowner's testimony was reproduced as follows: "I saw a large crowd of men armed with guns coming toward the store. They were shouting. I locked the front door and sat down in the parlor behind the store. I heard shots fired. I heard the front of the store being smashed in. Some men came into the parlor and pointed guns at me and said: 'Suppose you not go, I shoot.' "

A word about the use of transcripts. If the writer is to use tapes properly it is absolutely essential that they be transcribed. The process is however terribly costly and it can take 7-12 hours to transcribe one hour of tape, and it is necessary to find a transcription typist who is well educated, sensitive and sensible. Because it is difficult to transcribe nuances or emphasis, the writer must be prepared to go back to the actual tape and listen. As onerous as this sounds, the ideal solution is for the writer to serve as her own typist, assuming, of course, that she fulfills the criteria. Advantages of the transcriptions are manifold. The writer is transforming spoken word into written word and here is where the transformation process begins. Whether the information is organized on a computer or in a card catalogue is minor. The process of finding and refining specific information is only really possible with written transcriptions. For me, perhaps, one of the greatest advantages was that the transcripts made possible the process of gleaning. After the stories had been lifted out, after the processes were explained and locations described, there was still the gleaning left: little kernels of information that went together to enrich the descriptions or perhaps provide an overall impression. I used some of these bits when I wrote this description of the mine environment: "Ask a group of miners about the smells in the mine and the answers will range from a description of the odor of gas mixed with stagnant water through the stench of a rotting new carcass all the way to one man's lyric statement that a good part of the mine smells like black current jam and marmelade, the two most popular sandwich fillings. Ask a group of miners about the noise in the mine and the answers will range from a claim that it was so noisy that all conversation was impossible to a description of the subtle squeaks and rumbles which warned of danger."

Five separate very short quotations went together to describe the ambivalent attitude of the town of Nanaimo toward Fraser Street, a legally sanctioned red light district. "The only time I was on Fraser Street was when I was in my teens as a messenger for the express office." "Miners went there mostly to drink." "It was the loggers who went there for the girls." "It was mostly sailors off the boats, not the local people." "Business guys used to go there more than anybody else." "If it was not for the mine men, they would have had to close a long time ago." As you all can appreciate I have just barely touched on the process of gathering oral history. I found all aspects of the process to be a fascinating exercise. But one of

those not appreciated by non-practitioners (such as my family and most of my friends) was that eyes did not necessarily light up when I announced having finally understood some illusive piece of information or finally understood some mining procedure. It has been a great pleasure, therefore, for me to speak to an audience of kindred spirits.