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Rev. Tom Johnston being interviewed by Myrtle Bergren
Miss Laura Johnston

transcribed by Irene Suessenwein

Begins → This is Myrtle Bergren interviewing Rev. Tom Johnston and Miss Laura Johnston
on June 13, 1979, for the Coal Tyee Project.

MB: Mr. Johnston, where were you born?

TJ: I was born in Featherstone Park, Northumberland, adjacent to

MB: And where was the coal miner community that your family came from?

TJ: My father was born in a place called Outerside, Cumberland, that is near
and he worked in the mines in that area.

MB: How big a family did you have?

TJ: There were six of us born in England and one here in Canada after we came
from England to South Wellington on Vancouver Island.

LJ: It is interesting that my father came out in 1910 and worked over here and
sent for mother, and she brought the six children out here on her own.

MB: Ch, that must have been hard on the mother and the father too.

LJ: The stories that I've heard of the trip across were quite something.

(Chuckle).

MB: Yes.

LJ: Six children...

TJ: Those were the days when you didn't have a few hours across the Atlantic
and a few hours to cross Canada. As near as I can recall, we were just under
ten days on the ocean and eight days going across Canada. We disembarked
in Quebec City and took the then northern route from Quebec City across the
country and through the Crowsnest Pass. That was before the days the CPR
had the tunnel route, the shorter route from Montreal, Toronto to Vancouver.

MB: Did you help your mother?

TJ: Well, I was the midler, I was the third and I had to look after a younger brother and a younger sister, which was quite an undertaking on board of a ship and on the train.

MB: Did you ... were you seasick?

TJ: No, I was not seasick. I think, mother might have had two meals during the whole trip from Liverpool to Quebec, but the family did fairly well.

LJ: I've heard mother tell the stories about how kind some of the young men who were single travelling across the country were to the family, looking after the children.

TJ: Those on board of the ship and on the train, they were on the ship from Liverpool to Quebec and they were on the same train from Quebec to Calgary and I remember the - particularly two young men. They really were big brothers. to the rest of the family. Saw that we got our meals on board ship and saw to it that on the stops across country that we got the necessary supplies to keep all six well fed and mother cared for.

MB: Wasn't that good. And what were these young men coming out for?

TJ: To work in Canada, that's all I knew. What particular trade they were going to be engaged in, I can't recall.

MB: I imagen, there were at that time many young men coming out as your father probably had come.

TJ: The train was actually an immigrant train. They didn't take regular passengers. There was a train load that started in Quebec City and they deposited passengers on route.

MB: That was the CPR.

TJ: The CPR, yes.

MB: When did your father come out, did you say?

TJ: 1910.

MB: To?

TJ: To South Wellington.

MB: How did he find the conditions, do you remember?

TJ: Well, the conditions in England, they certainly were different but I couldn't say that we suffered any hardship, not to begin with, but we weren't long in this country before the eighteen months coal strike started. And those eighteen months, that was quite a trial. Imagine, a family of six fresh out from England and then just during that time, Laura was born. So that made seven during the long part of that strike. And during that time, we moved from South Wellington to Nanaimo, became residents next door to the Haliburton Street Methodist Church. My folks were very active in the Methodist Church. Both, my father and my mother were converted as young people before their marriage, and they were involved in the church throughout the whole of their life.

MB: The Methodist Church was the center of their...

TJ: Very much so, yes. Both, in England and in South Wellington and...

LH: It was interesting that my mother had been confirmed in the Anglican Church and in South Wellington, when the Anglicans needed a Sunday school teacher, she was able to assist there. And then the Presbyterians ...

TJ: There was only one church building: Methodist. But it served the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and the Methodists. And, of course, I was reared in three of the denominations, it was Anglican in the morning, Presbyterian in the afternoon, Methodist at night. We lived across the road from the church and we were churched through the times and didn't feel

Sunday was always regarded as a special day. That was the Day of Days, when father wouldn't be working. He would be home, the whole family would be together, and even so there were six children, we entertained the visiting rever. most of the time. And so, the Lord's day, as it was known by folks those times was the highlight of the week.

LT: We used our good dishes, always. We always did have linen table clothes, every day of the week, but somehow Sunday was extra special.

MB: Well. (chuckle) And did your mother and father have positions in the church?

TJ: My mother was more active than my father. My father had a hearing problem that limited his participation but he gave solid support to all, my mother and the rest of us in our relationship to the church.

MB: Did they have a choir?

TJ: Not at South Wellington, but at Haliburton, yes.

MB: Haliburton.

TJ: On Haliburton Street, that's right.

LJ: My first Sunday school teacher was Mr. Brian.

who at that time must have been, seemed to be anyway, in his seventies, eighties. He was the first school teacher in Nanaimo.

MB: Well.

LJ: I got him in the end of his term of office, if you like, in Haliburton Street Methodist Church.

TJ: And throughout all his teach Sunday school, he took the little ones, children, and I would say that literally hundreds and hundreds of the old timers in Nanaimo, those who attended Haliburton Street, melted this church. I asked children. They started their church career under the direction of Mr. Brian.

MB: Do you remember when he passed away then?

LJ: He lived to a good age and his wife lived even longer, and lived on the top of Haliburton Street on the corner of Alberts and Kennedy. And as children, we had by this time moved into the Harewood area, Five Acres, as it was known. As we used to go by their house, Mrs. Brian used to come out and ask the children to do messages for her. So, I couldn't give you the exact date, but they lived to a good age..

MB: I remember meeting an old Sunday school teacher. I forget what nomination, at one of the miners' reunions. A very elderly man.

LJ: It could have been Mr. Matson.

MB: I think that's right.

LJ: That's right. Yes. It would be Mr. Matson.

LJ: Oh, yes. This is many, many years before .

MB: Yes.

LJ: Because Mr. Brian had come in the 18 hundreds, you see.

MB: So, he was in his seventies and eighties then.

LJ: Yes. Well, Mr. Brian in his time, as a layman, would be regarded in much the same light as Mr. M was in the later times.

I remember Mr. M from my earliest days in Nanaimo and had the privilege of ministering at the Chase River Church under his leadership after my a number of times, so that for the Methodist

still kept his association fellowship with those of the old church.

MB: Do you remember the interior of the Haliburton Street Church?

What was the baptismal, the font for instance.

TJ: No, they... see, the Methodists in the early days had a very very plain church. They did not have baptismal fonts, they simply used small basins, as I recall. Now, when I say basin, I don't mean a ten inch or an eight inch but they were like a small salad bowl, a little silver base and they dipped their fingers. I remember when Laura was baptized and Mr. Wilkinson, the reverend, I forget his first name now, do you recall him?

LJ: I came across it just a while ago, I can't give you his first name right now.

TJ: We were acquainted with the Wilkinson family back in England.

LJ: Reverend Robert.

TJ: Robert. One of the reasons my father brought the family to Canada was George Wilkinson who was at that time manager of the coal mine in South Wellington. He kept writing to my father and urged him to come to Canada and the arguments he used were largely those suggesting that his family would have better opportunities in Canada than they could hope to have in those times in Northern England. So, we were very, very closely associated with the Wilkinson's and when Laura came along and her time of baptism arrived, Reverend Robert Wilkinson was not the

pastor of Haliburton Methodist Church, though his parents owned the house, that we lived in, he ministered in the Cedar area more of a
 Timberland Methodist preacher.

LJ: When you ask about baptisms, one of the first I remember as a child was in the Haliburton Street Church. We came out of the primary room which was in the back for this particular service for the Barsby twins, John Barsby is the one who later on became mayor of Nanaimo and
 but his twin daughters were the first that I can recall ever seen baptized.

TJ: There you weren't baptized. You were baptized not in the church but in the house next door.

LJ: I see.

TJ: And I mentioned the fact that he was not the pastor

LJ: Oh.

TJ: and for some reason or another that being the case then the baptism was held in our home rather than in the church. We followed the same ritual.

MB: Can you remember the actual ceremony?

TJ: Oh, yes. See, I was eight years going nine, when we left England and came to Canada. So we moved to Haliburton Street in 1914 on my birthday, my eleventh birthday. I was eleven years of age when we came to Nanaimo to take residence here. So I recall it quite clearly.

MB: What did the baby wear?

TJ: Oh, anything.

MB: Well, I mean...

TJ: They had to have special gowns and they were, you know, the long gowns that babies wore in those days. They had lace and frills and what have you. It was a special occasion.

MB: Most of the people, I suppose, who were there and that, would be involved in the coal mining industry?

TJ: Oh, yes. You are talking about the Haliburton Methodist Church? Of course the greater number would be, though not totally, they were

merchants, builders, other trades that attended.

MB: And they were mainly, I guess, Anglo Saxons, weren't they?

TJ: Yes, yes, the great proponents would be...

LJ: Mainly, yes.

TJ: from the British Isles.

MB: And during that long strike, was there any change in the attendance or did it go up and down or...?

TJ: It didn't. Well, it brought about some difficulties. There were those, you see, who would ... didn't go on strike and continued to work, and you have both, the strikers and the those who continued working, members of the same congregation. That created some delicate situation, but ... nothing serious. As far as I can recall, both groups continued to attend church and to a very, very large extent they forgot their differences on the Lord's Day. Took them up Monday through Saturday. We had friends in both groups. We continued to visit, as I recall. I won't mention names, because that wouldn't be fair. But I can remember, I was old enough.

LJ: My father was basically a union man.

TJ: Ya.

LI: But in no way would either father or mother allow the union to dictate their personal lives, so that friends from England - mine managers, my father was a miner - the friendships continued and despite attempts to make them ^{break} brake those friendships they absolutely refused. And those friendships continued right down to the years when I went down to take my teacher training in Victoria. I boarded with the Wilkinson family.

TJ: Mr. Wilkonson was a manager And Mr. James was a manager, and another school chum of my father's Joe , he too was a manager. And as far as we were concerned, we had the same kind of relationship with all three mine managing families throughout the whole of the strike. We went to their homes, they came.... That was part of your private life, that was part of your religious life. God came first, the church, and I started to preaching those ... the church relationships over working relations.

That was my background. And I suppose it had quite a bearing on ones outlook on life. I must confess, I've been very loyal to the group that I serve -- Served as General Superintendant but I never regarded ²⁶ in the sense that I have ongoing fellowship, both the clergy level and the membership level, with all ²⁹ We were reared not to judge people by their colour of their skin, their racial background or their religious background the same way we reared ³⁷ They were very strong convictions that God was the creator and that he made man and they were member of the same race and therefore all God's creatures. God's crowning creation, you were to meet them and have your relationships, particularly religious, on that basis. That doesn't make me any less a royal faithful member of the organization of which the privilege and be a General Superintendant overseeing the work in Canada and sixteen overseas countries. And I tribute it to the influence of my parents as far as the attitudes towards others because it was carried out and if you have checked on the nature of the strike, you know there were some pretty rough times. They brought the militia into South Wellington. I can remember hearing the shotguns popping and we had experiences were dynamite was detonated adjacent to homes to intimidate neighbours. We lived next door to one who was subjected to simple pressure. But there again, we were neighbours. We went to school, we played, we went to church, The relationship of being neighbours was not altered because they were on one side of the strike and we were on the other.

MB: That must have been difficult for you as children, because children, you know will copy each other, name calling, there is ...

TJ: That's right. However, that was something in building fiber into your character. I remember, mother used to encourage us, "Sticks and stones will break your bones and calling names won't hurt you." Therefore

when they call you names just ignore it. This is the way we are going to live. This is a manner of life, and we are not going to permit pressure from

LJ: We lived in a very interesting neighbourhood on Five Acres too. It was a cross-section of different, of different outlooks, and I have often in speaking to groups said, "That's fine. You can work with people that you differ from. But in our house we do it this way." May I illustrate it this way that Icecream-Johnny came around seven days a week. I was allowed to buy an ice-cream cone six days a week, but in our house you don't buy on Sunday. It wasn't hardship at all. It didn't matter what everybody else did, that's the way we did it in our house.

TJ: Sunday was the Lord's Day. Six days shall thou labour, the seventh day was God's. We were raised to recognize that the word God spoke principles, and God set aside, one day in seven, on which he was to be honoured and ones earnings were to be brought to the store house to support or what we referred to as the Lord's work. And I must confess, I haven't felt that being reared in that fashion didn't hurt me as far as my personality is concerned. It gave me strength, gave me understanding, and as Laura pointed out, you learn to work with people. We have different backgrounds, different outlooks, different attitudes, but you still stuck to your own. And were a decision had to be made you just made it automatically, I would say. Spontaneously, would be a better word. That was the way.

MB: Gave you strong characters. On Sundays, did many people go to church?

TJ: The fair percentage of the population did, but the great majority of the population gave all support to the church. They were not regular attendants, but they at least supported what the church taught and stood for. Now, many older people, who did not attend church, they saw to it that their children were in Sunday school every Sunday without fail and that they were involved in the Choir, involved in the youth program of the church, so that it had a very beneficial effect on the
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of the young.

LJ: You know, I'm often surprised that the picture being put out, that miners tended to be rough and uncouth... If you were to go back to the

families established in Nanaimo, I think, you'll find that among them were many who had, what we call hobbies now, interests, that were whole centered but quite unique. I had friends whose father was a gardener of no mean caliber. We used to sit as youngsters looking through his flower magazines. We knew the names of the most exotic plants. He specialized one year in sweet peas in another year in gladiolas, then he would go into something quite different again and right down to his last years, not too long ago, he kept his little greenhouse, his garden going and ... begonias, he had 150 different varieties of begonias. Now, that was one man. That was Mr. Pinket. Mr. Harris, out in Chase River, was a bird fancier, along with others...

TJ: Tom Wilkinson.

LJ: Yes. There were the pidgin fans. You still have some: the Addisons, and so on. Those go back right through down.

TJ: I would say the great majority had what we referred to as You raised your own potatoes, you raised your own carrots and parsnip and turnips and...

LJ: flowers and so on, but then again, there were dog fanciers, raised . I can still see those going along Nicol Street, the family....

TJ: Bulldogs...

LJ: And somebody else had airdales...

TJ: Not only they had...

LJ: And then Jim Smith was a chicken fancier... Now, I'm not just talking about raising chickens. He did go into chicken farming later and became an experimenter for the university. But even in the early days, were fanciers. I think that is the right word, isn't it, when they specialize in certain breeds of birds and so on. They had a name. It wasn't a rough ... Not only that ... But if you wanted to walk home on an evening you are going to be late, you chose the time that the scow came in and then you knew that you were safe. You walked home at the time that the miners were coming from the scow and you could go up Albert Street

from town over....

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TAPE 1, SIDE 1L

TJ: I have lived and laboured in communities from the Maritimes to British Columbia, and I have been in pulp paper communities. I've resided in Montreal and Toronto, St. Catherines, just to mention a few, Edmonton, and in the United States of America, and I don't know of a single community where I lived where children and young people and those who were older, had a fuller, richer, more rewarding life than we have in this area. Now, if I, you know, if the clock was turned back and I was given the choice where would you like to reside and grow up by choice, I'd chose Nanaimo as I knew it from an eleven year old boy until my middle twenties.

MB: You had a happy family life?

TJ: Very happy. I had a very fine community life. This was a good community in which to live..

LJ: We didn't need any organization for youngsters. We had enough in our neighbourhood to make up a ¹⁸ to play any games that we fancied. We had all of the fields, what was called the cricket field then, it was in beautiful condition. It's been restored now, but in those days it was just^a beautiful location. We had the hills to wander on, the woods, we knew where the first violets came out, we knew where the first curly lily would come, we knew the exact stumps where the yellow violets were, and we used to go looking for them early in the season. You did not

Tape 65
Side B
Begin

touch anyone else's precinct. There were areas where we picked, there were areas where South Five Acres picked, and we did not presume on the others. Of course, you've heard about ^{bomb} fire night, that was a highlight. We had our own little area just of Robin's Park. Now it's houses but then it was fields. We started in September to collect our logs. From the youngest right up, I'd only been six and then I lived in that area right through many, many years, but from the time we were tiny we probably picked the twigs of things that went in, but we got railway ^{ties} and you got all the old lumber that anyone had, and you scrounged for miles, and that took every evening. There was no problem with it what to do. Mind you, there were some episodes that were not entirely honourable and some of the Chinamen would use to disappear and then he would come back and collected again. Little squirmished went on from place to place, and then, as you build it up, and they would be...

TJ: Oh, that was the general idea. The different areas competed to see who could have the biggest and the best and most

LJ: Yes. And then, when they were lighted, you see the whole area from place to place and you visited from one to the other. Now, parents made coffee, lunch, cookies, we roasted potatoes, corn, if you had it, everything went to that particular.... It was delightful.

MB: Did you have fire works or anything like that?

LJ: Fire crackers.

MB: Oh, ya.. Not the big things. And nobody ever saw to safety regulations. I've heard of accidents later, but we didn't seem to have them.

TJ: Well, they were family orienteed operations. One thing about the mining community as remember, it was family oriented. See, the other family's father was a friend of your father and that went into an ever widened circle, so that you not only belonged to your own family, but you belonged to the community. And I can think, of literally thousands of fathers who were interested in what happened to me. They didn't say,

"well, he is not my boy, I couldn't care less." That was not the attitude. He was Tom Johnston, my friend. They were interested in seeing that you didn't get into mischief, you didn't go wrong. Now, these sort of local, non organized, but co-operative collective efforts were not the only ⁷ . I played tennis, I played Lacrosse I played baseball, I played soccer, I canoed, I boated, I fished, I hunted. You belonged to... see I took, let's see, we used to have plays, there was the choirs.

LJ: You had a rich, full life.

TJ: I can't remember any dull days, I can't remember any unhappy periods, I bloodied one or two noses in my life t-me (chuckle) and perhaps had a black eye or two because not everyone ⁸

LJ: No, he wasn't big either.

MB: How tall are you?

TJ: I was about 5 foot 10 (inches), 10 and a half...

MB: Well build..

TJ: I was strong, athletic. I wrestled, I boxed, I engaged in all of these other sports. You understand? I grew up and the church was the center of my life. It didn't interfere with my physical, normal, natural development.

MB: One question, before I go because I want to interview the individuality. You just brought up and that is about the family oriented nature, character of Nanaimo and this makes me realize how bitter the feelings must have been in that difficult time, because we all know that even today it's just under surface. People will refer to their grandfather ... and this gives some insight as to why those feelings were so bitter, because the place was family oriented.

TJ: Very much so. You can't have an eighteen months strike without effecting families and now, we pointed out to you our religious strength, our spiritual influence preserved us from becoming part

of those bitter contentious approaches to the situation that divided families and family against family. However, you were talking about the fact that I had entered into the ministry and wondered

MB: How?

TJ: what influences contributed to that. In my teens, I had no idea that I would ever become a minister. I wanted to become a successful merchant. I wanted to make money. I wanted to live here and wanted to have a boat down and an automobile or two in the garage. I, I think, even the school system that we had, the teachers were very fine school teachers in this community, and they encouraged the ambitious to improve your lot in life, to make the best of any natural talents and gift that ...

LJ: The day I went to school, and I was a little Tom-Boy, you see, I was the youngest of seven, everybody else had known how to read and write, but I was probably more outdoors and so on, the family wondered. The day, I went to school, I said, "I want to be a school teacher." And I don't think I ever changed my mind. And so, the family sacrificed to see that was getting all the schooling that was necessary to meet my ambition..

MB: I wonder, how they managed...

LJ: From a miner's family, ... that was a sacrifice. You see by the time I was going to university, I graduated from highschool at sixteen, so I couldn't go into normal school, you had to be eighteen to finish, which meant that I had a year there, so I went to UBC for one year and then to normal school when I was seventeen. This was 19... I was in the class of '34--- so that was 1930. The depression was starting and the family really sacrificed to sent me one year to university, one year to normal school and came out and I was for two and a half years without a job. Now, then it took years to replenish what had been put out because work was scarce, father working only about three days a week. But to talk

about the spirit of this, that determination to have your family do as well as possible. Remember, I had the chance to do house work, and I was already to do it. My father wouldn't let me. He said, you went to school to be a school teacher and if you go and do that, you may never go back into what you have trained for. It's quite a back ground and quite a heritage that you look back on.

TJ: ¹⁵ you need to offer that is quite common.

MB: That reminds of Mr. Gueulette in Ladysmity...

LJ: Yes, I know Mr. Gueulette.

TJ: That was quite common. That was the Canada we came to.

LJ: Yes.

TJ: That's why our parents made the move. I never ¹⁶ to marvel that my mother brings six children and the oldest eleven years of age and the youngest was ¹⁷ and she would about fifteen, eighteen months.

LJ: She is six years older than I am.

TJ: Ann?

LJ: Yes.

TJ: How old would she be?

LJ: It's quite a back-ground to...

MB: Yes. They must have been studious people too. Did they read or...

TJ: My father was an omnivorous ¹⁸. He read everything.

LJ: We used to say that dad read the paper from the fish. (chuckle) Before it was thrown out. It didn't matter what it was. He was, he was dad, and he was never without a book in his hand. And from the time, I could tottle, I went downton every Saturday with my father and I got a book, I could be sure of it, every Saturday. There was a custom, I wonder, if anyone has told you about this. The miners would meet every two weeks. That was payday. They went down into the bank. They received an envelope. Now, that was for the partners, two of them.

So, they came out of the bank and on the street corners they would stand, open the envelope and divide the money. Now, I was never quite sure exactly how this was divided, because it wasn't always even. But, I never heard any contention or anything, but they would talk this over and then divide the money and all the children would be along the streets with their fathers and the partners would always give you something. So that our pocket money wasn't scanty in those days. We did quite well for ourselves. But it ^{was} quite a custom, and I can still see that in my mind sight. Going into the Bank of Commerce, there would be ^{special} tellers set up almost just like a balloting, a voting booth, and they would go to the particular wicket.

TJ: I suppose, you heard how they were paid, by car, by yardage, by timer...
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MB: Yes.

TJ: Well, you see, if one of the partners was off a day, then the man that was there, he would keep track of all. Say, you set the timer^b, say you put up, if he advanced the tunnel eighteen inches during the day or yard if he loaded so many cars, cars of rocks, so many cars of coal, then he would have that addition, that would be his portion.

MB: I have heard to, that there was a very close-knit society, the coal miners.

TJ: Oh, my Godness. They had to be. They had such a risky life.

I worked for a number....

I got tired of white collar. The

idea was physical prowess was an important ^{ce} on my

They had to be physical in order to do their work, and I don't suppose

I was any exception from any of us. They were on shift. You go to

work at a certain time, you finish at a certain time. You only have

so many days--- you were missing something if you were a merchant

you would go at eight o'clock to six o'clock, on Saturdays eight o'clock

to 9.30, and then you cleaned up after closing hours, so you had a long,

long shift.

MB: Ya.

TJ: So, I went to work in Reserve mine operating the winch. I think, in the good providence of God. Father got careless and because of his carelessness I suffered an accident and it made me aware, "You might have shifts but ^{you could} ~~might~~ be dead (chuckle) you know, so quickly." It was far from being a joke. So I decided that's enough mine^{ing} for me.

LJ: As a child, I can remember being very much afraid when father went down the mine. The stories of explosions--- and one vivid picture is my father suffering from sulphur in his eyes.

MB: Humhum.

LJ: Sometimes he would be off work for two or three days not able to go into a lighted room. That bothered me, I used to hate the idea of his...

MB: I think you were crying, I guess. You put tea bags or somethings...

TJ: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They suffered. They approached it very stoical. It was amazing the conditions under which they could work and did work and I've seen my father's hands cracked ^{clear} ~~across~~ with hard skin cracked and our hands would be bleeding but they would be back the next day. They rubbed vaseline, now that was difficult, That was part of making a living providing for your family that they have the necessities of life and some comforts.

MB: When did you decide --- or what made you decide to go into the ministry?

TJ: Well, I--- see the early Methodists talked about conversion. I was personally accepting and confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Now, my parents joined their teams in, as I refer to, revival meetings, made the decision and associated ^{themselves} ~~myself~~ with the Methodist Church. I grew up under the influence of my parents. However, during my childhood, they did not have revival services, they did not have altar service^s when you were invited to make a personal decision. The Pentecostal folk in Vancouver sent a group of young people to Nanaimo to conduct a revival service in, what we knew, as the Island

GT Hall, that was on _____ Street, and we became acquainted with the fact that they were in town. And at the same time, Dr. Charles Price conducted a campaign in Vancouver in which they stressed the fact, "God heard and answered prayer." And they have folks were ill who were not being helped in such way by the medical profession that they became healthy and well. At the time, my mother had a very serious heart condition and it didn't look too promising for mother that she would be around for too long. In fact, she was not supposed to go downtown, not supposed to engage in any activity that would put a strain on her heart. She went to Vancouver in spite of her condition and while there with anyone coming in contact with her, laying hands on her or going through any ritual of while Dr. Price preached and referred to those portions in the word of God. There is provision for divine help to meet one's physical needs if they are sick or ailing and mother was wonderfully healed. and came back wonderfully ~~steared~~ ^{stirred} up, and of course, we heard more about the days of their conversion, the early years received the first love and that experience and, of course, it created a more lively interest on our part. So, I decided that I was going to ^{go to the} ~~be~~ IOGT Hall which I did and as a consequence, I entered into a similar experience of conversion and commitment and became quite actively involved ^{bearing} in testimony on street corners and so on. *Arising out of ^{all} that, it became apparent to some that*

perhaps I had some talents along that line, some courage and I felt very definite inner conviction that that is the direction of my life I should take. So, I made my father and an older brother acquainted with the fact that I wanted to step out of the business partnership and enter into the ministry and follow that as my calling. And briefly, that's how it came about. I went back East, you see.

MB: Have they all in your family changed their ... church that they attended?

TJ: No, not all the members of the family.

LJ: All but one.

TJ: Yes. All but Leo.

LJ: Now, they had children's meetings on Saturday afternoons. I recall going down to greet the soccer team coming back from the Dominion Championships in Eastern Canada. Because the family were involved in soccer and so on, I was lifted up on the shoulders of the players and carried up from the wharft from Commercial Street and so on, and ^{for} from some reason, I went right from there to the children's meeting in the IOGT Hall. And it was on that thing that I decided to give my ^{heart} part to Christ.

MB : Was there any argumentation between the family at all?

TJ: My.... *The eldest* member of the family, she was married at that time, Gertrude, was the first, then I was the second and...

LJ: I must have been...

TJ: You must have been the third , and subsequently Ann and George and Bill.

MB: You wouldn't have had any dispute in any way, because of the way you have been brought up?

TJ: No.

MB: To accept everyone.

LJ: Basically, that's right.

MB: Yes.

TJ: Oh, my older brother didn't continue to worship with the Pentecostal, you see, he remained in the United Church. My sister Lina in the United Church...

LJ: She is still in the United Church in Victoria.

TJ: Ya. So, it made no difference in family relations of neither the immediate family or ... you understand .. oncles, ^{aunts} cousins. I suppose, the background influences that response. Yes.

LJ: I hadn't thought of it so much, but I have worked interdenominationally all my life practically. When the United Church didn't have enough speakers,

I was on their lay list going to the Indian mission, South Wellington, Lantzville, and I worked in *Inter-University* Christian Fellowship right down to the present day.

MB: Did you have any trouble, for instances, as you say, on street corners? Did any of the miners What was their reaction?

TJ: Well, the Salvation Arme^e and the Brethren and prior to the Brethren, years before the Methodists were quite active. They would have public meetings. That's meetings outside, the meeting house, as they called it.

LJ: Our corner was by Spencer's store, Eaton's now. It's quite different than what it is now. There was the odd occasion when a few rocks and the odd tomato came down.

TJ: Well, of course, the Salvation Arme^e had *beside where Day's was*

LJ: They had the same thing too. Theirs was up where *44?* store is now.

TJ: So, it was a custom that was not introduced by the Pentecostals. We simply followed in the footsteps of the Salvation Arme^e and the Brethren.

MB: I didn't know that the Brethren...

TJ: Oh yes. The group that meets on Wakesiah now, they were very active in open air services. It was the traffic problems *that brought an end* to street meetings. See, the automobile made a great deal of changes. In the horse and buggy days, you see...

MB: The Brethren and the Pentecostal and the Salvation Arme^e and I don't know what other churches, they must have had quite a membership.

TJ: Oh, yes. And then, you must remember, the Presbyterians and the Methodists were quite aggressive. Now, I might mention, that they didn't have the revival and the altar service, but they used to have union services. At one time, *have faded* the Methodists, Presbyterians and the Baptists, they erected a temporary tabernacle across the way from where the post office is adjacent to the Anglican Church. It was a different

formation....

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 11

TAPE 11, SIDE 1

Tape 66
Side A →

It is the Presbyterian, St. Andrews, that is before union, and the Methodists and the Baptists and the Brethren and the Salvation Arme**e** ^{bore} ~~that are~~ public witness to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the incarnate redeemy saviour and son of God and they saw our responsibility as a necessity of a one on one relationship you see. The father cannot act for the son, the mother cannot act for the daughter, and this is not just new testament, this is old testament teaching. You are a responsible individual and you enter your own ongoing relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ . So, it was not too difficult a step for me to accept and confess and commit and follow the Lord in such a way that I would devote all of my energies to the promotion of the different aspects of the work of the church.

MB: Now, this is an entirely new angle I have on the life of the coal mining community than I have had before. Because...

TJ: May I refer back to something that I said earlier. I have had the privilege of living in quite a number of communities. I have visited in many, many, more. There are not too many communities in Canada that I have not been in and ministered in one capacity and many of the United States of America, I have said that, I still have the settled conviction

that if I were given the personal choice where I would want to spend my childhood and grow up as a young man, I would still pick the Nanaimo I came to as the area in which I would want both to reside and to grow.

MB: You are a persuasive man, I can see that.

TJ: Well, I have learned in the course of fifty years of active ministry, that what people do, has a determining effect on their character and their conduct. And where there is an element of a risk of danger it calls for courage, it calls sometimes for commitment that you really have to care for your family to undergo the hardships and run the risk to provide the necessities of life. Now, that builds a fiber of character into people. That is very, very important. You see, you can't work where there are great risks careless of what is going to happen to your fellow workmen. You simply have to co-operate or else. You might find yourself caught up in a situation that will cost you your life if you are not capable of handling it on your own. The miners simply have to work co-operatively. If a man didn't care how he put up timber, the roof came down. It would come down on him and the others. So, there is self interest as well as unselfishness.

Talking overlapping.

TJ: That's right. And it was a very wholesome community life. Certainly they have working conditions that are better. But I don't think it's a better community. If I had my choice of living in Nanaimo as it exists as a community today and living in the Nanaimo I grew up at as a teenager I'd take (chuckle) what I grew up in.

LJ: Yes. The attitudes.

TJ: Now, for instance, there were those who indulged and intoxicated but they would give you a clout in the ear as a boy if they saw you pick up a bottle of beer. They didn't give you a bottle of beer, they would give you clout in your ear, as they would say. "That's not good for you, leave that alone. That's " I overheard conversations of that nature many, many times. And it wasn't a sign and

and symbol of gracious living. They pointed out to you, "You grow up."

And I can mention names, there weren't too many of them but they weren't characters that you were encouraged to ⁸⁻¹emulate. .

So, there was a great deal of wholesome, ^{moral}model strength in the ...

LJ: And there was an acceptance of characters. In our neighbourhood there was one man who was not too fond of work. There was a big family, Everybody helped him out. He used to go hunting. He got ^{lost}lossed every year. And he used to just sit until somebody went and found him.

(chuckle) And you had your district jokes, you know, like so and so, you just go out, and the other characters that weren't too ^{fond}found of working. There was one and his wife used to look at him in the morning and she would say, "Oh, he is too peaceful to ^{wake}weak up to go to work."

He couldn't keep a job anywhere. He died just a short time ago, about 90 years of age, I think. But, you accepted all of these and the neighbourhood provided if there were talents in some families. And they dressed the children for concerts and affairs, and the children didn't suffer, I don't think. Everybody came in --- so it seemed anyway as you look back on it and I don't think it is an idealistic picture because we were a working community. I suppose we fell into that category that you hear about now, we were poor, but we didn't know it.

MB: Because everybody was the same.

LJ: Well, not so much that. You enjoyed everything you had. And not only that, but what you had you ^shared. There was many a time that I carried a bucket of coal to our neighbours or somebody did --- always at night. You put it on the back porch. You see, miners received one ton of coal a month at very low rate. These other people were not ^{miners}. And when hard times came you saw to it that they were never cold.

MB: Yes.

LJ: So, you took it over after dark so that noone saw it. And it was there in the morning. After my father died, the people I met who

came with - not big^{things} but the considered things that had been done, was amazing.

MB: What do think had brought about the change then?

LJ: Well, quite frankly, ^{I think} taking God out of the center of living. Because I have taught for 39 years in Nanaimo schools, and I saw many changes. Now you had a moral standard that was accepted. We talk about the Judae-o-Christian standards. They were the norm, and you accepted those. But in this so-called post-Christian era, you have no standards on which to build. I went through those stages in the schools. And I know some of it of the changes of attitudes. Where do you ^{start} stop to build character if there is no foundation, where do you start - if the families are divided and broken\ This is - ^{to my way of thinking} to my knowledge - a good part of the change that is come in that I have seen.

MB: My neighbour goes to Wakesiah Church, and he was a union organizer, and he thinks that the society we all hope for is a dream of all of us cannot not be realized by men. ^{Its got to be brought about by god.}

LJ: It never will.

MB: No. It's got to brought about by God,

LJ: Men in corporation with God.

TJ: God...

LJ: God works through men.

MB: Yes.

TJ: God, he does not do independent work.

MB: This is what ^{facted?} he didn't say.

TJ: See, God's method is men. It's not methods as such and.... the modern society is all caught up with slogans and methods and programs and so on. And if you turn to the New Testament you find the concern and the truth is not with programs but with methods. It didn't deal with with problems. It dealt with people. Today, we are dealing with problems,

we are not dealing with people. All right, you solve the problem, you still got your trouble with people. You haven't changed people and unless the change is in that person, I --- in my preaching on occasion I used to say, "Good men will make bad laws work, Good men will make poor methods work. Good man will make anything work," because you see, the method is God working. Weak men through men for men by men in the interest of the good man. Folks would say, "If we have good laws that makes good people." No, no bad people would break good laws, bad people would break ^{bad} laws and if you are dealing in the realm of law and not with people as such, Well, you say they have problems, all right. Deal with people. Say, now, their problem is that they are not educated. All right, let's educate them. You educate the bad person, and you ^{we} made them ten times as dangerous as they were when they were uneducated. We used to say when our missionary, see, that we found, the backward people were afraid of two things: demons and educated people. And both took advantage of them, so that if you go in and you deal with people. When we do missionary work, we don't go in to bring Western culture or Western laws. You go to be with people and bring them in a one ^{on} to one relationship with Christ makes the person good, essentially good, if you understand, their motives, their attitudes, their aspirations and their abilities. And therefore they go to one within the context of their own culture and produce good.

This had been the problem when the church stops doing his business and gets politically and it is the same now with unions. My father was a union man, my father was a working man, and as a boy, I went through an eighteen months strike. I picked coal on the ^{slag} slide heaps between Nanaimo and Reserve mine at 5.00 o'clock in the morning and picked coal ²⁰² _{in the bag} and made sure that we had heat in the house. That was during the strike that was my father sacrificing in the interest of improving the working conditions and the earning capacity of his fellow workmen. But, if that's all you do, but you don't improve the

character of the man, now personally, I'm the son of a working man and I grew up with them, you know I'm supposed to say that I have a bias toward the working man but I fear unions today more than ~~that~~ I fear corporations or business or the financial interests. I think, they are more dangerous, because of the caliber of men that are giving leadership. I might startle some folk but they strike fear into my heart. They have no more pity, concern, compassion or care for the basic rights and interests. Even the right to live, and the right to have some personal conviction, some scope of freedom of action. That doesn't denigrate them, downgrade them, they couldn't care less. They grind you into the ground. I've seen intimidation. See, love casts out fear and they operate on the fear basis. They don't love the working man, they don't love the average Joe. From my viewpoint, they scare me more than the bosses scared me when I was a younger man thinking, you see, from the other side of the situation. Now, I still think, growing up in the community in which I grew up, proved ^a very great help to me.

LJ: But I do think, one thing that was instilled into us was ^a work ethic. If you were employed, you gave a good day's work for the employer ^{ment} that you worked for. That work ethic was clearly important.

TJ: Now, you should talk to Ernie Johnston, you get another side of the picture. (chuckle) I hope.... *tape turned off + back on*

TJ: You were asking, "What do you think has brought about the change in society today.": I would have to answer in my judgement, *for what it is worth,* the departure from centering life in a one-on-one relationship to God for us through the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore ^a the sacrificing of biblical, spiritual and moral standards for humanistic standards, and there is a pertinent verse in scripture in Paul's letter to the Corinthian Church. They measuring themselves above themselves became foolish for you have no fixed standard. And if you have no fixed standards, and everyone does that which is right in his own sign, you have confusion worse confounded, and I'm sorry to say that typifies the situation in which we find

ourselves in the political world, the educational world, the financial world and business world, and sad to say, in the religious world for we have turned away from the God of our fathers that made, let's say ^{the British} people leaders in so many areas ^{for} almost a thousand years. That doesn't mean, that they were faultless and always blameless [;] but they certainly did make progress throughout the years. And in the areas of the world that I have visited ^{where} or the British people played a role, they did not follow a policy or subjugate ^{ing} the people but they work^{ed} to bring them to an understanding of the basic standards on which they operated, so that they themselves one day would be able to take over the management of their affairs and capitalize on the gains and the goods, and I'm talking about the good things, spiritually, morally and physically that the British system which was God oriented, Bible oriented, Christian oriented in the truest sense of the word. ^{where} Man is an individual who is at his best in a one-on-one relationship with God ^{he knew} where God is his father and he sees his fellow men as his brothers within that relationship. It's maybe a lengthy answer, but it is a bit of philosophy.