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Narrator**

**Steve Trimble
Interviewer**

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ST: Yeah, it's working. So did you grow up in Minneapolis itself or...

JEM: Well yes, grew up in Minneapolis, I was born in Minnesota. We moved to Minneapolis in oh I guess I was around seven years old and I became rather politically active when I was about 16, I suppose mainly because I grew up in a period of time when there were no jobs and the people had a lot of problems. At that time there was a lot of demonstrations going on and there was several pitched battles down, you know down by the Courthouse where people were demonstrating for, at that time they were just demonstrating for food, they were just, you know something to feed their families and during that period there was a lot of you know where they'd have a warehouse where you'd go down and you get a box that, it had surplus foods and you'd go down and get boxes of food that in many cases was you know, it wasn't even fit for human consumption and I think it was probably the reason why I became active in the [unclear] of the movement too because I could see that you know if 10 people, or if one person went down to the Welfare office and they'd, the social workers at that time were a lot different than they are now. They acted very much like it was a personal affront to them that anybody, you know you were really looked down on if you didn't have money enough to buy your own food, you were just kind of the scum of the earth and I could see that if one person would be go down you know they'd throw them out and they didn't get any help. If 10 people went down, they'd probably get some help and if 100 went down you know they were eager to help them. And also the fact that there'd be a demonstration and I could see that things like the police would come in with tear gas and you know they'd club people and tear gas them and do all sorts of things like that and at that time there wasn't much doing in the labor movement, mainly I suppose because most people didn't have jobs anyhow but then when jobs starting opening up and people went to work, course the wages were very very low and then the fight for wages and hours and things became the big push at that time...

ST: When would that have been roughly?

JEM: Well see the Unemployed Councils and the fight for unemployment insurance must have been around let's see '36, late '30s, from '35 to '40.

ST: So that earlier part just going down for, pushing for better food had been early '30s.

JEM: Yeah, uh-huh, and towards the late '30s the struggle for unemployment insurance was one of the big fights that went on that so many people like you were saying before they just take it for

granted, and at that they were arresting people right and left, you know they'd go to the state capitol to demonstrate for unemployment insurance, my husband spent I think six months in jail for you know, during that demonstration and that was, that was probably 1938 I should think. Maybe a little earlier than that. And like I said then after jobs became a little more plentiful and people you know went to work the wages were well I suppose at that time \$1 an hour was high wages. And then they started organizing a lot of the industries that had no organization before, they didn't have any, craft organization and of course when the CIO started they got down more to the, to the grassroots people or you know the people that didn't have, didn't work in the craft category and then they had some of the big strikes, the flour mill, let's see what were some of the other big struggles that they had...

ST: Strutwear.

JEM: Yeah the Strutwear by then was, there was another one went on for quite a while but course then you look back in the newspapers you see that during Flour City strike, that was where so many people were shot. There was two killed and 50 shot in one night and at that time they had, the manufacturers and the business people had a very strong organization, I was trying to think of what the name of that was...

ST: Citizens Alliance.

JEM: Yeah, Citizens Alliance, it's a very strong organization and they had armored cars that, of course every night you know that they'd have a battle down to the picket line, the next night there'd be thousands more people would be down on the picket line. And these armored cars would circle around the, you know around the streets and then they'd shoot those they'd be shooting tear gas off into you know into the crowds of people and then of course as the battles grew more intense then they starting shooting with you know with guns and each you know, each night they'd be, battle would get a little more intense until finally it roused you know the rest of the people that weren't really involved in the strike at all but it did involve the general population to where finally we made some concessions and the strike was settled, but that was really just the beginning because at that time there was just one struggle right after another was going on for wages and hours and...

ST: Your involvement with the unemployed, what sorts of things did you do?

JEM: Well I used to help in the office a lot with different you know getting out publications, flyers and things like that and then groups of us would go out to different factories and then as the shifts would let off we'd hand out leaflets and demonstrations, picket lines, a lot of things going on, I managed to get into most of them.

ST: Do you remember any of those demonstrations stand out or anything?

JEM: Well one of them stands out in my memory quite a bit because I got a piece of a tear gas bomb in my eye and there again the police were using these armored cars all the time, every time there was any kind of gathering whether it was trade union or demonstrations for food or whatever, they'd be out with their armored cars and the tear gas. Well see all they'd do is just drive around in these armored cars and shoot tear gas out the windows and this particular one, this a big demonstration and when they came in with the tear gas, the tear gas bomb exploded and I got a piece of it in my eye and I was kind of out of it for a quite a while because when I discovered where I was, I was two blocks

away and I don't know how I got there, I don't even know what happened to the rest of the crowd because by that time it was dispersed. We used to have some demonstrations you know in the mayor's reception room, sometimes we'd go into the City Council meeting and try and be heard you know before the Council. In most cases you know if the crowd was big enough, if you had enough demonstrators you could get your point across but if you didn't have a big enough crowd, three up...

ST: What were some of the points you tried to make?

JEM: You mean speakers...

ST: Well yeah, what would they, if they made a presentation to the Council, what were some of the demands?

JEM: Oh, to the Council.

ST: Or...

JEM: Well when they would speak to the Council of course it would be that demand for food and oh there was many issues of course, all around the bare necessities of life you know, they would try to get clothing for a family and it was many times it was done on a very personal basis, there'd be a family that needed help and they couldn't get it and sometimes it was just because of some technicality that they would try to keep people from getting, or they would have, they'd try and get cash rather than this food you know from someplace, you know maybe you'd get a whole box of oranges, you know that's fine and dandy if you...

ST: Like orange juice.

JEM: ...if you had a thing going for oranges, but it was also, you know, it was a question of nutrition, you know kids had to have milk and sometimes there would be cabbage that they'd, you know they'd have a lot of left over cabbage, or a surplus of cabbage and so everybody'd get a big basket of cabbage, and these are the....course the issues were trying to get more help from the agencies that...we used to have a lot of demonstrations down at the relief department, there was cases where they would take some of these, like I said during those times there was very few welfare workers that, I mean they were the old stereotypes that you see on some of the old Our Gang comedy series you know where this real crusty old woman comes in and drags the kids into the orphanage and things like that. This is the attitude that people had that worked in the welfare offices. There were a few, as a matter of fact when we started to organize the labor movement, some of the social workers organized a union of social workers and they have, they also you know tried to help get more benefits for people, but up until that time their main object seemed to be to give the least help that they could rather than [unclear] to be beneficial. And there were cases where they reached in and grabbed one and pulled them right through their little old window you know, people got pretty angry.

ST: I can imagine why. What would happen usually say down at the relief office, if you'd have a demonstration, what would it involve, like a march or a...

JEM: Yeah, it, those things kind of, kind of grew, they would, the word would get around that they were going to go to the welfare office or the mayor's office or the courthouse the next morning for a

demonstration. Well sometimes that wouldn't be much but then they'd say well you know we'll be back here tomorrow morning and by the next morning there's going to be some news and it got spread around and the next morning it would double and the next morning it would be tripled and it was just by force of numbers that they were able to get any kind of help.

ST: Word usually get out by word of mouth or was that like your...

JEM: Yeah, pretty much.

ST: Or your...

JEM: And there would be some, you know, there'd be some news on, in the newspapers and on television. Course during the big strikes, you know the, there was dumping, you know the headlines in the paper every single night was what had happened on the picket line the night before, and that's the way it just grew.

ST: How did you like, okay so you're moved in here to Minneapolis and at 16 you start getting involved, do you remember like why it was that you, you know, finally walked into the office or how did that happen?

JEM: I don't know you just keep meeting, meeting people and they, they say well you know we need some help doing this or that and so you know you go up and start helping and then the first thing you know you're, it's your job, it's sort of like volunteering for something and then finding that now it's your responsibility so, it was you know everybody was just kind of putting forth whatever effort they could and they, the more you got into this kind of thing the more active you became and the broader your scope became. It started out strictly in the unemployed movement where you know where my interest first and of course my dad was also you know, he wasn't active in the sense that I became active after, afterwards but you know he was down on the picket line and things too.

ST: Okay so I was getting ready to ask you you know what sort of your family life, if, what the political tone was when you were growing up.

JEM: Yeah well my dad was fairly radical, but not in the organizational sense, I mean he was, his thoughts were there you know, his beliefs and his feelings were there but he never you know was the kind to get in and get into an organization, become part of it or you know to become a leader in it or anything like that. But I suppose you know my background probably came from a lot of his, then he had a friend too I think that influenced, he was really the one that influenced me more towards becoming organizationally involved.

ST: Who was that?

JEM: Well this was a fellow that I don't know even how my dad got acquainted with him, but he was a family friend and we used to you know used to visit back and forth, he used to visit at our house and vice versa. And now that I think back, I think he was probably more instrumental in me becoming organizationally involved in the labor movement than anybody else.

ST: Was he a socialist or...

JEM: Yeah, uh-huh...

ST: I mean an official member...

JEM: ...and also in his, in his, he was very clever person in arguing with anyone, he loved to get into religious arguments with people and he, he could quote the Bible forwards and backwards and upside down and he would, he liked to get somebody that was very religious and then he really could pick apart everything they said, he could pick it apart because he could find, he could say one thing and then he would go to another part of the Bible to say just the opposite and I think part of that influenced me too, the way he could argue, or he could win an argument.

ST: So were you...

JEM: [Unclear]

ST: What part of Minneapolis did you grow up in?

JEM: Northside, in the Finnish community. The Finnish community at that time went from just a couple blocks north of Hennepin Avenue where there was residential area all the way up to about Penn and Glenwood, in through there.

ST: Glenwood now is still kind of...

JEM: Yeah, and so [unclear] my activity was with the Finnish people.

ST: As it [unclear]

JEM: Yeah.

ST: Are you Finnish yourself?

JEM: No.

ST: [Unclear]

JEM: Yeah, I think it was probably because you know I lived on the northside and consequently got acquainted with a lot of Finnish people and spend quite a bit of time in the Finnish Hall, you know, where there was always dances and banquets and all sorts of things like that going on.

ST: So you went to North High then also?

JEM: No, I went to Vocational.

ST: What'd your father do for a living?

JEM: Well he was a barber and of course he farmed you know, he was on a farm before we moved to Minneapolis and then he did barbering and let's see what else did he do, he worked at a couple different shops but I really don't know what he did, what kind of work he was doing, what he you

know he did barbering for many many years, that was his main occupation.

ST: What about your mother, was she a big influence on you too?

JEM: No, she was a typical housewife, had seven children, never you know never worked outside of the home or anything like this, she was a follower not a leader.

ST: What did they think of you starting to get involved in...

JEM: The rest of my family?

ST: Yeah.

JEM: Well most of them didn't, didn't approve or disapprove very strenuously. As we got older I think some of my sisters resented it more because of well you know there was a period of time where the John Birch Society and the Nazis and everybody got, got pretty active and we had some you know some rather difficult times with it, there'd be threats and things like that and it was kind of hard on our kids.

ST: Yeah, Irene was saying that too, she'd get those same kinds of...

JEM: Yeah, my kids in school you know they would, it would you know we'd get all kinds of telephone calls you know, threatening calls and things like that and of course there was a lot of publicity at different times too and one time my husband was called up before the House Un-American Activities Committee and it was all over the newspapers and of course at that time I was working and people at work were yeah having some very, they got very strange reaction from them because nobody said a word, it was just like, just like you know nothing had happened or anything but they were all you know how they'd look at you rather strangely, so it was, it was rather hard on the kids.

ST: Well what, you're with the unemployed movement then for three-four years or so?

JEM: Well it just kind of developed from the unemployed end of the labor movement.

ST: How did your, how did what you do change then, was that, started developing, well it was pretty much the same kind of thing you know where of course then I started working in the union offices so it was more of that but it was the same kind of thing we'd put out flyers and things like that and demonstrate, didn't make much difference if you were demonstrating for food in one sense or if you were demonstrating for wages so you can buy the food, that part really doesn't, doesn't make much difference.

ST: Who did you work for, individual unions or...

JEM: Yeah.

ST: Which one was your main...

JEM: Oh let's see I worked for the mills, let's see there was one millworkers, I can't remember the name of the union itself, I worked for them and then I worked for the Clarion Industrial Union Council and the UE, so worked for quite a few different unions.

ST: Did you ever get paid or was this mostly...

JEM: Oh yeah, yeah, but of course at that time wages were very low in any industry and of course they were all so low, so a lot of my work was volunteer. There was quite a long period of time when I worked full time for the unions.

ST: Did you get trained to do that, or was it just coulda came by experience?

JEM: Yeah, just kinda grew into it.

ST: So they didn't have any like organizer schools or anything like that.

JEM: Oh no, no, no. And I just you know, I just grew up in it, so that I guess I knew about as much about organizing unions as the organizers did because you know I was always in it right from the beginning. Usually they'd start out and there wasn't any union at all and then you'd get a few people together and a few more and a few more and then it wasn't until I started having children that I, you know quit that kind of work, then I'd go back to work but I went in and always worked in private industry mostly then.

ST: When, so you, when did you get married during this period?

JEM: In 1938, yeah '38 and then we went up north, that's when we went up to northern Wisconsin to the mills up there and then it was a whole 'nother ballgame. There was unbelievable conditions where the lumber barons owned the whole town, they owned all the houses, the houses that mill workers lived in, they owned the power company, they owned the officials, it was a hard place to break into, believe me. See they hired oh people, the guys from Kentucky and places like that. As a matter of fact the president of the union after they got organized up there, was completely illiterate, couldn't read or write, he couldn't even write his own name and these people well they more or less got trapped. They were offered jobs, they went up there because there was jobs in the mill and without having any education, they'd get there and they never got wages, you know I mean they never got paid a salary, they got a statement at the end of the month saying how much they still owed the company. I know it's unbelievable, you wouldn't really think that could happen in that period of time in this country, but it did.

ST: They'd dock them for the travel [unclear]

JEM: They owned the house so they had the rent to pay, they had the grocery store where they bought their food, the script, and they'd go in and buy their food with the script and then they had their utilities, and all their expenses so that at the end of the month they didn't have any money coming, it was, they, the company told them how much they still owed the company so they were always in debt to the company and this is the kind of trap that they were trying to break out of and that I think was one of the most militant groups of people I ever ran across in my life, they were really fighters. This one, he's the president of the union, was a very droll kind of a guy and he had this hillbilly accent you

know and of course they'd never been out of you know between the hills where they were born and this lumber camp up there so that when they started organizing and started making trips to Madison and places like that and union negotiations and this kind of thing it was you know a completely new world to them and it reminded me of one incident where these...

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TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

JEM: ...yeah, [unclear] you know most of the time when we were talking would be, we'd be talking about you know union problems and things like that, but when we got out we were just kind of shooting the breeze about where these guys came from, what kind of lives they had lead and things like that and of course during the strike you know people were, you know food was a real problem, the only way that strike ever existed was through the farmers bringing in food and things like that and guys going out and getting a deer or something like that and so I was talking to Darley, his name was, and I was asking him you know he's, like they get fish and things like that you know bring it into the commissary for you know feed the people and so I was asking him when they went fishing you know how they caught their fish, [unclear] what do you mean, I said well do you use a rod and a reel or you know do you net them or how do you get them, he says hell no we shoot the sons of bitches. This is what they did, they sat with this shotgun and boom, fish jump up and he gets them.

ST: Great.

JEM: And he was, he was a great guy, course that whole bunch up there were really, really something. And that one of course they had vigilantes, this was the same group of vigilantes that took Hank Paull out and beat him up.

ST: Now these were timber workers or they were steel workers?

JEM: This is was in timber, but the, they imported strikebreakers you know.

ST: I mean you were working with the timber workers.

JEM: Timber workers, yeah, and they would, I remember that one morning we went down, down to the picket line and the gates opened up and here comes this whole mob of guys out with clubs like that and they just rambunched right into that, right into the picket line and just beat the daylights out of everybody that they could get their hands on. There was one fellow killed, they found, they stuffed him into a culvert and I know they had an autopsy afterwards and they claim that he had died from a heart attack from fright, being pushed into the culvert like that and rather than being beaten to death. But it's, as far as I was concerned, it didn't make any difference you know, if it was his heart you know if he got beat to death or if he died from you know from the experience of being shoved into that culvert so they were, there was no conviction or anything, they didn't convict anybody up there of doing anything excepting the strikers. They had three county jails full of strikers, they, see first of all the vigilantes came out of the mill and beat them up and then the cops carted them and threw them in jail. So it, of course the mill owners owned everything you know, they owned the law enforcement agencies, they owned the government, they owned everything up there, you know, they had, it was an empire, they had their own, they had their own empire and...

ST: Well when you went up there were they on strike then or do you remember when the strike first happened?

JEM: No, no, we went out, we went up to organize the mill and I don't remember how long it was after we you know after we started to organize before they, and then they had the National Labor Relations Board came up to conduct the elections, but that was a hard fought battle up there, it was way, they didn't want to give up their part, of course what happened was that as soon as they forced them to pay wages and pay them a living wage, then as soon as they got any money then away they went, but at least it broke the stranglehold of the lumber mill owners up there.

ST: What was your job up there, did you actually go into the mills, or did you meet people afterwards...

JEM: No...

ST: I mean how would you approach them to try to get them to join the union?

ST: Well, my husband actually was the union organizer, I did mostly well we put out a newsletter kind of thing and I organized the Auxiliary and oh just kind of organized things you know, I didn't really do any public speaking or, you know talk generally to the workers and things like that but mine was mostly in the you know getting the bulletin out and getting commissary set up when we went on strike and getting donations of food and stuff like that. As a matter of fact one night we went, my husband was, well everybody was in jail, I was about the only one left out and the only reason I was because there was a, an elderly couple and I don't know how I happened to, I think it was just because we were standing up in the back end of the truck and I saw them, she was, it looked like she was getting beat up and so I went down to where she was and I got a hold of her and I took and we put her in the car to get her out of there and by the time we got up away from the mill you know up around where the houses were and things the vigilantes had chased all the pickets and everything and everybody was just scattering in all different directions and when I got this woman taken home, then everybody was you know, the ones that weren't gone were just nursing their wounds and stuff and course they arrested almost everybody then and I went down to this, by that time it was getting dark because I remember I went down behind an outhouse and stayed there until it was dark enough and then I went to the home of one of the, he was one of the guys in the union, I can't remember what position he held but he was in jail, but anyway I got over to his house and his wife was there and I stayed there for a couple of days but then we sent in some, somebody from Duluth, a carload of guys from Duluth from the union because there was no employee leadership at all, there was nobody left out. I mean all the union officers had been arrested and so anyway they had, the word was out that they were going to smash up our, our office equipment, mimeograph machine, typewriter and things like that so these guys came down and we loaded, we loaded the stuff up in the car and took it into oh it was place in Wisconsin, Rhinelander I think it was, took it in and I rented a room there and just left the equipment and then I went back to [unclear] again. And then things kind of quieted down and then of course they had the trials and things like that and then you know they brought in some help from Duluth and I think Henry Paull was there as one of the defense attorneys. And when we went, went to get stuff to bring it back they had, instead of taking it down you know through the regular roads that people travelled because they were blocked off, they had police, vigilantes, everything out there, you know, blocking off the roads, so when we went to get the stuff and bring it back so we

could put out some news bulletins and things we went through, we went on this old logging road, down through the woods, it was a fire trail and this one guy from the union who went to help me get this stuff, when we came to this log that was you know across the road, he was going to get out and move it and said no, no don't get out, so we drove over the top of this big tree that was down over the front of the road, but every time we'd get to a certain place you know we'd look and here'd be a, could see you know the headlights on the cars and stuff like that and we'd take off on another little road, finally got the stuff back there. And then the National Labor Relations Board came and held an election and things quieted down and...

ST: You won the election?

JEM: Yeah, but like I said after you know, I kept in contact, in fact one of the, one of the guys from the union moved down here afterwards, we saw quite a bit of him after he moved, after we moved down here and then he died a few years back and kind of lost track of him again. But most of them moved after that, the ones that we did, you know the ones that we did hear from afterwards were, said that they'd all moved out.

ST: What did the Auxiliary do?

JEM: Well mostly organized food and the cooking and things like that and we started a group we were going to, just to sing and also kind of pep songs to sing on the picket line and stuff like that, but these people were very very bashful you know, they weren't used to being around people very much and they weren't very aggressive along those lines and it wasn't very successful but it did help a little bit just to, you know, to raise the, to get the spirit up and show some solidarity, the whole town was 100% behind the strikers.

ST: You say the farmers sent in a lot of food and stuff too from the...

JEM: Oh yeah.

ST: How long did the strike last?

JEM: Oh it went on for quite a long time, I can't remember...I can't remember how long it was but must, it must have gone on you know from the time we started to organize it was probably a year until it was, you know until the election and stuff like that.

ST: When did, how did you meet Harry?

JEM: Oh that was kind of a funny thing, he was speaking at a meeting and I was setting up the literature, that was one of my, one of my jobs always was taking care of all the literature, so he was, he was up on the platform and he was testing the microphone and doing one two three and you know and stuff like that and I was answering him in the back and we had everything all set up for the meeting and then there was some time between then and the time the meeting started so he came back and suggested we go have a beer. And that was the beginning of that.

ST: This was still during the unemployment things or was this was more into the labor?

JEM: No, this was more in the unemployment period. We were, see he was, he had been a leader in the labor movement you know for quite a long time and then he, he was quite well acquainted with Humphrey and those guys too because see he was in a lot of the political end of it, he ran for alderman two different times, the same ward that Humphrey and Naftalin and all those guys were [unclear]...

ST: Freeman.

JEM: Yeah, Freeman. Humphrey was not very fond of my husband, they used to have some really pitched battles between those two. So...

ST: What'd you do after this Wisconsin, you came back then to the Anvil?

JEM: Then, did we move to Wisconsin after that... I think that was when we moved to Wisconsin and worked for Eau Claire Industrial Union Council and after that we went to Chicago and my husband was organizer for the UE in Chicago.

ST: And did you continue to do political work too or...

JEM: Uh-huh.

ST: How did it work, like, I mean one obvious question is you know like you start having children and trying to be political at the same time, were you able to manage that very well or did you have...

JEM: Oh yeah, besides I held down a job. Course my children were like five years apart and so usually by the time I had a baby the other one was old enough to kind of help the baby you know. And of course I had a family of relatives around to help the kids, so there wasn't any...and then of course a lot of the activities, you know meetings and things like that were held you know in our house or somebody else's house and the kids you know a lot of the stuff you know the kids we'd just take them along, so it wasn't any big hardship as far as that goes.

ST: How 'bout your own political education you know as time went on, besides the you know obvious experiences that you had, did you do any...

JEM: I took classes in labor history and oh well, during that period there was a lot of educational work going on, there was lots of classes and like I said I always had the job of setting up the leaflets and the publications and things like that for meetings so I did a lot of reading and I attended you know quite a number of classes.

ST: Who would teach those?

JEM: Oh, I, I don't know if there'd be any of these people that you would know, there was, there was one fellow named Norman Zurnig, there was, he's very good, I always liked his classes because it seemed like I learned more from his than from anybody else.

ST: Would these be like union members or would they be teachers with WPA or...

JEM: Well, they were, they were just people along the lines, you know with that were in the

organizational movement, some were trade union and some were from the unemployed movement and some were political and they had a lot of different backgrounds.

ST: So it'd be like, would these be evening courses usually?

JEM: Uh-huh, yeah, most of them.

ST: Were you ever in any like study groups, did they have those?

JEM: Yeah. Yeah we used to have a lot of study groups.

ST: What would you, how did those work then?

JEM: Well, it was mostly that we would have one teacher and then of course we'd have a lot of assignments, of books to be read and then a lot of it was discussion and on the basis of the books, I don't know if you call them teachers or moderators because you know we got most of the information out of books.

ST: What would it be like...

JEM: Well I remember we had one class at dialectical materialism at that time, I was so confused by the time they got through the lecture on dialectical materialism. I remember one class that we had, the instructor said well now what does dialectical materialism mean to you, I says it's that table. He was using a table as an example, and by the time they got through I says it was the table and I think that kind of thing you have to, you have to have more experience and things like that before you can really understand you know subjects like dialectical materialism, that's a little too deep you know. But in the long run you know I learned quite a bit you know just by absorbing what came along, but I think I learned more from experience than anything else.

ST: Yeah, I was getting ready to ask you if you thought that any of the education stuff really you know helped you in any real life situations, were you able to apply you know the theory to your actions?

JEM: No, I think it probably works the other way around, if you have experience you can apply it to your, to your studies rather than applying your studies to your, to your experiences, at least that's the way I found it. I could go out and learn more by becoming active in something than sitting listening to a lecture.

ST: How about cultural sorts of things that they did, you mentioned that one singing group, was that later?

JEM: That was well, come to think about, we had, we had a singing group way back during the unemployed days too. And that was, I can't remember, I can see his face and everything but I can't think of what his name was, cause I remember this, this same couple moved to Chicago and were living just two blocks away from us when we lived in Chicago and there were so many people that got transplanted to Chicago at that time that we used to have parties of Minnesotans and these were all people that were involved in the labor and political movement in Minnesota.

ST: What kind of songs would you sing, mostly political songs or was there also...

JEM: During, yeah, during that period of time they were mostly political songs.

ST: I mean like were there things, I guess I'm interested in actually finding some of those songs sometime. Were they stuff that had been written in Minnesota or were they more like the national?

JEM: No, they were national mostly.

ST: Sort of like CIO songs or something like that?

JEM: And oh we used to sing a lot on picket lines you know like "There Once Was a Union Maid" and they had, oh what was, they had something on TV the other night and they were singing and my youngest daughter she starts singing along with them, she says I remember when you taught us that song. My kids know most of the you know most of the labor songs, union songs, political songs, but the Paloma Singers, we sang some of that kind of thing. We also sang some ballads and other kinds of stuff too.

ST: And this was a Minneapolis group, when was that the '50s or... '40s?

JEM: It could even have been in the '50s or '60s, let's see, that was, no that wasn't so long, that wasn't way back.

ST: [Unclear] other things besides like regular classes and singing that was done along the cultural front?

JEM: No, we used to have a lot of social activities, lots of dance, we always had dances and picnics and it was quite a heavy social life.

ST: Think that added a lot?

JEM: Oh yes, definitely, I think it was very important, you know the, if you're going to sit and discuss politics and economics and everything until you're blue in the face but if you want to really keep people together and you know over an extended period of time and have a close relationship with them I think you're going to have to do it, a lot of it on a social basis too.

ST: You mentioned like on your kids learning the songs, did people or I suppose you'd only know of your own, did you try to raise the kids with some social consciousness?

JEM: Yeah, and I think I never tried to force it on my kids, because I think that's the wrong thing to do, they certainly had enough, most of my kids have grown up with many of the same kinds of feelings that I have you know, empathy towards people and, probably a dislike for capitalism and such and they have mostly grown up as, some of them are out and out atheists and some of them are you know kind of half way in between. That's something else I never tried to force on them or off them, I left it up to my kids, I don't believe that children can grow up in a proper atmosphere if they're forced to go to church or forced into your religion and your patterns.

ST: Seems like in the radicals we've talked to, the ones with that attitude ended up having children who were more progressive than the ones who really tried hard to make radicals out of them.

JEM: Yeah, I've seen too many of them drive their kids away from them. Not only in political, but in other people who, well I know some who are Jehovah's Witnesses, fanatically about it, and they drove their kids completely away from them and their kids became drug addicts and all kinds of things and I'm sure it was just because of the pressure that they put on them and I never believed in putting pressure on my kids, even, anything like that, even in their schoolwork, to excel in anything you know, if they would come home with a mark, you know if they got a poor mark in something, well that's, you know I'm not going to start bugging him about studying harder or something like that cause it's probably something they did that they didn't particularly have any interest in and I think they all, all came out to be pretty well balanced kids, none of them had any, any kind of hang-ups or problems, they're all different, you know like I said, now like one two three, three of them are atheists and the other two are somewhere in between, you know, they're not fanatically anything. And I felt particularly strong about them, of not trying to influence their thinking as far as religion. All I tried to do was to bring my kids up to be good people and to just you know, to treat other people well, to do their work and live a good live you know.

ST: Well that's what the political movement was all about to, trying to make it so people could do that. Could you talk a little bit about like the Farmer Labor Party, its relation to some of the movements that you were in.

JEM: Well, see I was, during the period of time when the Farmer Labor Party was strongest and most activity was around the Farmer Labor Party I was busy having children and wasn't that much involved when the, so I was kind of around the fringes of it. I wasn't like I said I belonged to the one Ward Club but I didn't really do any political campaigning for the Farmer Labor Party. I did go to some, you know we'd have, you know a big rally or something like I would go to it, but I can't say I was all that active.

ST: What were the Ward Clubs all about, at least the one that you were in?

JEM: Well of course that's you know where you're getting down to your basic grassroots so to speak where, where you had your nucleus of your, supposedly this is you know where you first start where you get these people together and they elect their delegate and on and on, on to the National Convention, I just feel that something happens, not in the Farmer Labor Party, after it became DFL, something happened from the time it left the nucleus of the Ward Club and got up...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

ST: Like what would happen at those clubs, or what would be say an average meeting like, if there is average.

JEM: Well, the of course the main subject would be the, during the political campaign of course it was you know the delegates and how the delegates were to be instructed and, and then of course after Humphrey and his crew got in there it became kind of a battle ground between his forces and, the big

fight erupted around whether or not they should join the Democratic Party and become the DFL and of course the, the old Farmer-Laborites didn't want to go that way because I think they probably saw the handwriting on the wall, that it was really the end of the progressive section of the Farmer Labor Party and it was the you know kind of the middle of the roaders and the ones that were in the movement to become you know who wanted positions and things like that, that wanted to get, wanted to move it over into the DFL and I think that was kind of the beginning of the end of the really progressive part of the movement.

ST: At the time did you think that was a mistake?

JEM: Yeah, yeah I did.

ST: Did you, on the ward level speak out against it?

JEM: Uh-huh. And of course all, the different wards had different feelings about it too and like in the ward that I was in at that time that was Humphrey forces that were really campaigning for you know, for the merger and the people like Elmer Benson and John Bernard and these guys you know they were very strong Farmer Laborites as such.

ST: A few of them were for it, I remember now see it as a mistake.

JEM: Yeah, that could have been.

ST: I think actually Benson ended up endorsing it, and now thinks of it as a mistake.

JEM: Well I think some of the political leaders you know they felt some of the pressure from the other side and I guess they felt that the opposition was too much to buck.

ST: Well how did that merger and everything affect like your politics, did you end up being kicked out of the ward club?

JEM: Yeah, I think as I recall, like I said I wasn't too active in the DFL at all to begin with and it'd probably be while there was a campaign going on you know my interests would revive and then after it went the other direction I just you know kind of drifted off, went to newer better things.

ST: What, like what things did you get involved in then?

JEM: Well, let's see after, after that time, of course at that time I had a couple small kids and another one on the way and I wasn't, I wasn't really too active during that period at all and then as I, let's see my husband had his heart attack, that was about fifteen, seventeen years ago, from that time on we couldn't do too much because he was very seriously ill and of course the doctors said you know he's got to absolutely quiet, no excitement and things like that. From that time on he was in and out of the hospital and we had to really lead a different kind of a life, the activities were, he couldn't even watch certain things on tv or anything because he was for a long time a professional fighter, boxer...

ST: I didn't know that.

JEM: And he was a great fan of all the boxing matches on tv, after he had the heart attack he couldn't watch, he couldn't watch boxing anymore because...

ST: He got too excited.

JEM: Yeah, he got, stirred him up too much. And I started having a couple health problems too and you know I ended up in the hospital a couple of times and had surgery and you know that kind of takes things out of you and then you kind of drift away and you lose contact with people so that you know instead of having constant people I would probably you know see them at some different event or something, but mostly we you know we lead a much quieter life after that.

ST: Did you, one thing I always like to find out from people is like was there any times at which you know especially you know maybe with, after the merger and everything, you got kind of discouraged and maybe temporarily wondered whether it was worth it to be progressive or did you pretty much keep your faith in things?

JEM: Well, I think everybody went through a period where they got pretty disgusted with, you know, fights seemed to kind of go on everybody especially when well it was like at the beginning of, not the beginning but you know during World War II where people started getting good jobs because of the war and they were no longer interested in, in I guess, well it was a different political climate completely. You know, I mean jobs were plentiful, money was plentiful, just the fact that a few million people were being killed because of it didn't seem to mean anything you know and I think that probably discouraged me more than anything else, that the very fact that people would accept war because it benefitted their own financial situation, you know it makes you feel what's the use, you know you feel like you're banging your head against a brick wall.

ST: How do you feel about that now?

JEM: You mean about the war...

ST: Well, or just, no, the general outlook of...

JEM: Well of course now we're back in a situation of high unemployment where [unclear] people are beginning to realize that it's all not peaches and cream and people are becoming more concerned, I think that they're becoming more concerned over the environment, I know they're becoming more concerned over the war. So it, at least people are not so complacent now, you know as they were during that period of time. And well the inflation, the prices of everything is, I think it was, I think there's a lot of issues to you know to really become interested in now.

ST: Yeah, for sure. Are you involved much politically now or...

JEM: No.

ST: Haven't done too much.

JEM: No, I, well I got out of touch with everybody...and in this area right here you don't find too many people that are, who think the way I do, you know, they're all, I don't know, actually I don't

know how the [unclear] people live up around here because you know like a single family, the only reason I can live in this place is because we share the house and share the expenses. I went to, oh, I belong to a group of Parents Without Partners and I went to, they have a lot of discussion groups and well you know how...

ST: Give it a try.

JEM: Give it a try, yeah. And I was so disgusted, I walked out before it was over. Like I said you know, if you got jobs and cars and things like that it seems like they have to really get hungry before they... I know it's a terrible thing to say about humans but it seems like that's the only time they think about anything excepting themselves, unless they get really hungry. But I do believe that there's a different [unclear] especially amongst younger people.

ST: Well why would, though, would it be I mean generally what you describe is true, but say someone like you, that's not true.

JEM: Yeah, I don't think there's too many people that think like I do.

ST: Well, why do you think...

JEM: In my [unclear]

ST: How do you think you've kept, you've developed your thought, kept it...

JEM: Well I think a lot of people that grew up during the Depression and then when they you know when jobs became plentiful like I said especially during World War II, when they started making money and they forgot that it you know that it was the fight in the trade unions that gave themd these nice fat salaries that they're getting now and they forget that when they're out of a job they can go and collect \$100 a week unemployment insurance, they think somebody's just handing it to them you know and of course you know, and through once in a while you get, you know you get a group of people together, but it seems like everybody that you talk to, you get in a group of people, everybody talks, everybody's got a different idea. You take one subject and everybody I talk to has got a different idea.

ST: There's no organized group anymore [unclear]

JEM: Yeah, right. And it's pretty hard to talk to somebody like that because they almost always get down to personalities or they know somebody that this happened to, or this has happened to them and they don't seem to be able to look at the broad perspective and...

ST: But besides that big strike in Wisconsin and some of your unemployment work, are there any other like Flour City strike or any of those that you were directly involved in that you had some experiences in [unclear] important?

JEM: Well I was even involved in the Teamsters strike, because it happened to be at that time that I was most you know just really getting into that kind of stuff and, there I began to see a little bit clearer political perspective because the leaders of that strike were very much involved in the Socialist

Workers Party and I could see that their tactics and things left a lot to be desired, I could even see during the strike, you know, the strike was very important and everything but the strike was geared more towards the ambitions and the wants and the desires of the strike leadership than it was actually to the workers and I couldn't... [phone rings, tape clicks]

ST: Well you were saying that you didn't totally agree with them on their...

JEM: Well I could see that their tactics in the union and in the strike, I felt was a reflection of their political life rather than totally an effort for organizing the unions. The kind of tactics that they used didn't really appeal to me.

ST: Well, did the, what did appeal to you?

JEM: About the strike itself?

ST: Well no, or just like, what was your philosophy more as being different from there's, like would you be more...

JEM: Well of course at that time we, the very, the only reason that I would support a strike like that was because of the great necessity for organization amongst people, because up until that time, you know, all you had to do was open your mouth and you'd get fired, nobody'd you know, you had no come-back whatsoever, didn't have a thing to say about it, you just, you know you either did what the boss told you or you're out on your ear. And of course the big issue of wages and living conditions and everything like that, working conditions was something else, well they're still fighting for it. And that was the strike itself and the union itself was a big thing, it was a big boost at least it made people realize that that was the way to go you know that...

ST: It was a breakthrough.

JEM: Yeah.

ST: Did you actually do work then during the strike?

JEM: Oh I was out on the picket lines and, that's one of the experiences that I had was going out in, you know they had in the strike headquarters, if there was something going on at some particular place they would call up and would send a, send squads out, cars out. I didn't like some of their activities, you know they'd go out there, and I'm sure some of them were not going out for, you know they were going out for other purposes than what they were supposed to be going out for. So like I said I got kind of turned off on that particular group of people.

ST: Did you, were you then independent or did you align more with the Communist Party or the Socialist Party?

JEM: I was a member of the Communist Party at that time.

ST: Before, before you, during the unemployment period.

JEM: Yeah [unclear]

ST: Was that a big step for you, actual joining of the Party?

JEM: No, I don't think so, probably because I was, you know, I just went into it as I sort of flowed along with the, with the whole thinking of you know of organizing people and the fact that it seemed like the employers and the, the companies had so much power and I never could see one person, one company, or one family or whatever having all of these things that they can't even use while all these other people are going hungry, you know, to me it just didn't make sense.

ST: Sort of a gut level...

JEM: Yeah, just kind of instinct I guess that I just couldn't understand you know, why it should be that way and to this day I think that's one of the things that bothers me so much now about you know inflation and prices and things like, like PG&E, they're apologizing all over the place because they've got these terrific utilities bills you know, they send you out these big notices saying well your utility bills are going to be higher than ever this year, about double you know and they're very sorry but they had to do it you know because of this whole power situation and then you pick up a newspaper and you read that their quarterly net income is \$6 billion or something like that and you think well it's insane, it's just insane that you've got all of these natural resources and you've got all of this land, all of everything and there's only such a few people can enjoy it. And I just grew up that way, I just grew up feeling that it's, not right that some people should go hungry while others have big surplus.

ST: When did you actually join? The early 30's...

JEM: Oh I was probably about 18 years old.

ST: So were you in any of the youth groups, or were you too old for those?

JEM: No, I never was in the youth groups, I was in the adult, probably because I was, I always felt older and kind of took more responsibility, I don't know, in my family life my sisters and brothers all married and left home and so I was the one that was taking care of my parents and supporting them and you know things like that and probably that had something to do too with the fact that I had more responsibility thrust on me and consequently I grew up that way, taking responsibility for other things and other people.

ST: Do you think, do you think the Party did a good job of helping educate you, you know to develop you or do you think like we were saying earlier that most of that came from your experiences.

JEM: No, they had, during that period of time, had very good educational program, they had a lot of classes and they encouraged people to study and read and had a lot of discussion groups and things.

ST: [Unclear] trying to figure what they did...

JEM: They had a lot of other kinds of activities too, otherwise if it, if it would have been just an educational, political kind of thing, I probably wouldn't have stayed with it, because you know I was a young [unclear] girl you know...

ST: Sure, I hope every once in a while...

JEM: Oh yeah, gosh we sure did a lot of that, that's one reason I'd like to find Rozie [unclear], she was my best polka partner. The whole building used to shake when her and I would do the polka.

ST: Well would you hire halls then for the big dances...

JEM: Oh yeah, oh we had enormous dances, just terrifically good dances and you know both union and Party and whatever. But they had a lot of social activities, and somehow or another my job was always organizing the thing you know. Yeah, we had an annual picnic and it would, you know it'd take weeks to prepare for it, because we had hundreds of thousands of people would come to it, and they were, you know, they were big things and course we used to have a lot of conventions too, and then I ended up in a political, in a veterans organization and got elected National Vice Commander of the Auxiliary, then I don't know how. No, not of the Auxiliary, National Vice Commander of the organization.

ST: Well did Harry go into the second World War then?

JEM: No, no, I don't know how I got into it. Cause my dad, nobody in my family, the only one, was I had an uncle who, who was in the service and I guess he started going to some meetings and so I started too. And they had a national convention here and so then I got involved in that.

ST: That's quite...

JEM: I seemed to get into everything that came along.

ST: You're a good joiner. Did, have you stuck with the Party or...

JEM: No, I, well actually I dropped, most, we dropped most of our activities when my husband got sick and like I said then I got cancer too and then some other surgery and stuff like that and you know I just kind of reached my limit and...I still you know I don't get into any organization either, I still get into some lively discussions with people and things like that, whenever I meet somebody I got to discuss [unclear] but like we were saying you know, people are, minds are pretty closed.

ST: Do you think all in all they were a good organization or do you think like they're, do you think you know sort of like on one hand the best things that Party did and then maybe some mistakes that they made that people should look out for and you know younger people today...

JEM: Well I guess it's the same kind of thing that no matter what you're into it's the diversity of people's opinions and you know it's the struggles that go on within any organization, seems to be the downfall of all of them, because once they start that inner struggle, it seems like they just kind of fall apart, if you don't have, now this was not true when I first joined the Party, it didn't seem like, I mean it seemed like everybody was on the same path and they were all heading in the same direction and we were in complete accord but then they started having these splinters you know and then when it gets on a national level it causes the disruption all the way down and then when it's on an international level...

ST: Yeah. When did that happen then, at least when you...

JEM: Well I guess it was when Browder split off and I'm, you know, as it would sift down to lower levels of the organization, you really didn't know who was right and who was wrong, by the time it got down to you.

ST: Generally was it like, so you didn't have a feeling, not all decisions were made on a lower level, and sort of sent up.

JEM: No, I don't think that's true of any organization.

ST: Well that's, you know, that's the model that you would strive for.

JEM: Yeah. But I don't think, I don't know if that's an impossibility or what, I mean it's like you said, it's what you strive for that, when you get down to the lower levels, most of these people, there again you have the same thing, where everybody's got a different idea and to try and send up decisions to be carried out on a higher level, I don't know how you're going to do it because everybody's off on a different tangent. But someplace along the line you know you have to have, you have to come to a conclusion and oh I think the Party made mistakes just like, because of the fact that there's human beings that belong to it, run it and everything's bound to have, mistakes are made and apparently they're still making them and then it's, now on an international level where they can't seem to come to any agreement. Theoretically I believe in production for the people and not for private profit. I don't believe in capitalism and to someday get to a society where you have no government and you don't need it, you know, maybe off in the future someplace but I'm sure I'll never see it.

ST: Could you talk just a little bit too about what you think your husband's role in the movement was during that period and I know that's hard for...

JEM: Well he played a very important role, he was something like I was, he started out in the unemployed movement, see he originally came from well he was in the east for a while, not, he was in Ohio and Michigan, that area, he was a glass blower for many years and then he was also a boxer, he boxed for about five years, was a champion, you know state champion in West Virginia and so then he of course started out in the unemployed movement in Minnesota and then went into the trade union movement and then into the political movement. Well of course he was in a political movement all the time but I mean this was the activities that were...

END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

JEM: ...union organizer for several different unions. He was a public speaker and he, his, most of the activities that were carried on during that period, you know he was always one of the speakers on the platform.

ST: So he was pretty good.

JEM: Yeah, yeah, he was a very good speaker. But he couldn't write worth a darn. The only way that you could ever get you know any kind of an article or anything like that out of him would be if somebody'd take it down while he was speaking because his thoughts could come out in words but he couldn't put them down on paper. So you know together we published a lot of different kinds of publications for unions, unemployment groups and whatever you know, we put out this bulletin up in that lumber mill, we called it the Layona Liberator. And course he spent quite a few months in jail at different times, he was arrested three times in the timber workers strike, and he was arrested in the Flour City strike and he was arrested I don't know how many times, well in the unemp..., in the fight for the unemployment insurance, that's where he spent I think it was three months or six months or something in jail but, he was accused of intimidating a state legislator. But he was a fighter type, you know, he wasn't much of a one for you know in the educational field, or the office part of it or anything like that, he was mostly out on a soap box.

ST: So he had not been political too much up until the '30s?

JEM: No, no, that was, when the unemployment movement started, that's when he got into it, [unclear]

ST: Well it's just like, during this whole unemployment, fight for unemployment insurance, could you talk a little bit more in detail on that, about your involvement and his.

JEM: Well, there it was the kind of thing that that kind of snowballed too you know the, the, I was just trying to remember if the unions were involved in that, there was representatives of a lot of different groups of people in that fight, there was you know from the veterans organizations, from the cooperatives, from the farmers, unemployment groups, trade unions, there was many divergent groups that got involved and it was a very big movement in Minnesota and they had a lot of demonstrations at the state capitol, you know they'd have thousands of people out there on the lawn for the capitol, and of course like in anything else, it seems to me like they called out the National Guard or something on the people at that time and when they, they went into, into the state capitol and into the Senate chamber and that's where they arrested, I don't know who all they arrested, but I remember they arrested [unclear] and that was, the charge against him was intimidating a state legislator. What they tried to do was get the legislature to stay in session without adjourning until they passed some kind of an unemployment insurance law, and instead of them staying there until they passed the law they arrested the ones who were trying to get them to pass the law. But eventually like most of the other struggles they finally won through and then of course the people like Humphrey and these guys they're stepping forward saying we got you unemployment insurance you know, everybody was taking credit for it then in fact the legislators that were fighting the hardest against it were later taking credit you know in their next campaign, they were taking credit for giving the people unemployment insurance.

ST: But in fact they fought for it.

JEM: Yeah.

ST: Was that the People's Lobby, or was that, was the People's Lobby a different thing?

JEM: No, I think the People's Lobby was more for the farm, I don't know now that may have been

part of it too.

ST: But you, you weren't part of that then?

JEM: No, I was around, I, you know, the name is familiar to me and everything but I don't remember if that was, see there was so many struggles going on at the same time, there was a lot of struggles going on for preventing evictions from farms and [unclear] there was, there was so much activity at that one time and then of course they'd have a lot of things where they would have these big demonstrations that would include several of these things and you know many different groups of people so People's Lobby I think had more to do with the farm...

ST: Farm Holiday...

JEM: [Unclear] a lot of farmers were losing their farms in those days.

ST: Did they do any of the kind of thing they did in Chicago with city rent evictions, did they have anything like that in the Twin Cities?

JEM: Yeah, well that was part and parcel of the early demonstrations in the unemployed movement, where they would if they were going to evict some family you know they would have a demonstration right, and sit right there on the front lawn, or on the front porch or whatever and wouldn't allow the eviction to take place.

ST: Did you go to any of those?

JEM: Not any, no, I don't think I was specifically involved in any one of those, and they had the same kind of things with the farm [unclear] stuff, the evictions from the farms.

ST: So, well your husband's, you think his biggest contribution would be on the work on the unemployment?

JEM: That would be kind of hard to say because he, he was active in so many things you know. I think probably his biggest contribution would have been in the fight for unemployment insurance, that's something that everybody's benefitted by since that time. And he did, did a lot, he, in the leadership of that right from the beginning.

ST: What would you think of if you had to judge [unclear] as being your biggest contribution, or the thing that gives you the most satisfaction looking back?

JEM: I don't think there's any one particular thing. Cause I, I didn't really, you know I was involved in all of it, but I didn't really lead any of, any of the demonstrations or anything like that. My biggest contribution was in organizing things I guess and in getting out publications and newsletters and that sort of thing.

ST: The work that if hadn't been done, the thing wouldn't have come off.

JEM: Yeah, right. But it's always been kind of my, my talent has been towards getting things

organized, you know, not only in that part of my life, but my jobs and things like that, I go into a place and go to work and it isn't very long before I find ways of doing things that'll simplify and I think basically must be because I'm lazy, I'm always looking for an easier way to do something. Well we say that the greatest inventors are the lazy people.

ST: To try to figure out an easier way to do something.

JEM: Yeah, that must be me, cause I would always, always organizing something.

ST: Well is there anything that I haven't asked you that I should have?

JEM: No, I don't think so, I'm really surprised that I remember as much as I did of all the you know, when you've done so many things, they kind of all begin to tumble around together in your head, it's hard to remember any kind of continuity and all when, what followed what along the way. But I've had some great experiences in my life. I feel that compared to most people I feel like I've contributed something to society, I mean I haven't just been born and gotten a job and had a home and so on and died and that was all, you know, I feel like I've done something besides raised five kids.

ST: Which is a chore in itself.

JEM: Yeah, it is. But I haven't been disappointed in any of them, none of them have become great people or great talents or anything but they're all good people and they've never given me any trouble, so I think that in itself is an accomplishment.

ST: Especially in these days.

JEM: Yeah.

END INTERVIEW