BOOK 33 CLARA DAY

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

Oral History Interview

with

CLARA DAY

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

by

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Program on Women and Work

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University of Michigan - Wayne State University

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CLARA DAY

Born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in approximately 1924, Clara Day was the middle child of a farm family of twelve. Her parents were very busy with all of the work that a farm and a family of twelve provided. All of the children were expected to help with the farm work, but education was considered a priority in the family and none of the children was ever allowed to miss school to work on the farm. Due to this parental emphasis on education, all of the children eventually finished high school, For Clara, who dropped out of school to get married, this meant returning and finishing at the age of 21.

In 1944, Clara, her husband, and their daughter moved to Chicago. In.1947 she began working for Montgomery Wards where she had her first contact with unions. In 1953 the Teamsters Union attempted to organize Montgomery Wards and Clara became one of their most active supporters. She later left her position at Montgomery Wards to work full time for the union. The different positions she has held over the years include: union secretary, Assistant Business Representative, Director of Community Services, and Executive Board member. She was the first woman ever to hold a position on the Executive Board of the Teamsters, a position she still holds today along with her job as Director of Community Services.

Day'8 activism was/is not limited to work with the Teamsters. In an effort to elevate the status of women in the labor unions she helped found the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Today she is second vice-president of that organization. In recent years as a member of the Illinois Governors Commission on the Status of Women, she has been very active in lobbying for the ratification of the ERA. Day is committed to the belief that you can't isolate the struggles of women, blacks, or workers for equal rights but that they are all interdependent. She exemplifies this by her diversified involvement. In addition to the organizations already mentioned, she is a member of the Chicago and Illinois Commission on Human Relations, the United Fund, and is a board consultant for the Urban League.

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Oral History Interview

with

CLARA DAY

October 30, 1978

by

Elizabeth Balanoff

INTERVIEWER: What I'd really like to know first is something about your

background, and I wonder if you could tell me about your child-hood, where you grew up, what your parents did and what life

was like for you as a child.

DAY: I was reared on the farm.

INTERVIEWER: Where?

DAY: In Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It was kind of handed down through the

family. There were five brothers who inherited the farm from their father who was my grandfather and therefore we all lived in the same area. My family was large and so were my cousins' families. I usually say I'm from a family of ten because those are the ones that I remember. However, I'm from a family of fourteen or fifteen. There were children who died at six weeks of their birth but yet they lived long enough to be named. I remember the deceased ones'

names. There was a girl and a boy named Thelma and Delma.

INTERVIEWER: Both died in infancy?

DAY: They both died at about six weeks, I believe. There was a

brother that was much older than I and he lived to be about nine.

His name was Elliot.

INTERVIEWER: What did he die from?

DAY: I believe it was pneumonia. It seems like a hundred years' ago.

He was older than I and in my lifetime farm children didn't have the hospital next door and the doctor next door as you would in the, city. And then I suppose in the South you just didn't have medical facilities available. Anyway, as I said,

it was before I was born. But I'm somewhat proud of the fact that

there were three sets of twins in my family.

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INTERVIEWER: Were you one?

DAY: No, I was not. I rather think that if my mother was a white

woman or even maybe nowadays she would have received some sort of special recognition, but she didn't. But she was proud of us, though. We had, as I told you, the girl and boy that died and one of the ten that I call the ten of the family were two boys and I remember one of the twin boys dying. He was about nineteen years old at that time and he had pneumonia, too. I suppose we have a medical term for it now that's something different but we called it pneumonia then and the doctors did.

I also have twin sisters, the girls are younger than I.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you fit? About the middle of the family?

DAY: Yes, I fit in about the middle of the family as you say. We

kind of referred to the older children as the upper half. I'm the first part of the second half of the family and the reason I say that is you kind of go in groups, you kind of stay in touch, like that. Then I, along with my younger sisters keep in touch, we just kind of relate to each other better. So I refer to us as a two part family. As I said, I'm the first part of the second half of the family, even though there's no great difference in our age we are spaced, we were spaced two and a half to three years apart. We weren't born close together as some families that are large. My oldest brother and the sister that were the first part of "the family" were fairly close together, just a

little less than two years apart.

INTERVIEWER: How many were boys and how many were girls over all?

DAY: There were seven girls; we referred to ourselves as the seven

sisters, and four boys. I can't remember when my oldest twin brother died. I was very small, it must have been about 1932, so I always

refer to us as three boys and seven girls.

INTERVIEWER: Did the family own the farm or rent it?

DAY: We owned the farm. The farm was inherited, as I said, from my

grandfather, and then it was split up between the five brothers after he died. Each brother had his own share but we lived close to each other, not as close as it might be on one farm, but we all adjoined each other. And I was reared between two bodies of water. One was a creek and one was a river and the only way I could get out from that farm was to have to cross a body of water, but being a youngster and being reared there it was home to me. It didn't bother me; as a matter of fact, it was quite exciting, very exciting. I like water today although I never

learned to swim. You would think I would.

INTERVIEWER: But you weren't afraid to go in a boat?

DAY: No.

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INTERVIEWER: Was it deep?

DAY: Yes, it was deep, it was enough to drown us. But I suppose

having older sisters and brothers, they always looked after me and I was too well wrapped in care to be afraid. But we crossed that body of water in a skiff to go to school and

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we walked about three and one half miles to school.

INTBRVIEWER: Was it a country school?

DAY: It was a country school. In our junior high years we took

a bus to the city for junior and high school, but until that time we went to the country school, three and a half miles a day. And looking back over it now it was some of the best days of my life to walk through the almost underbrush paths and to see the animals and to see the trees of different colors. Even though I saw it every day I still appreciated it—to see the different streams of water that you would cross, little branches as we called the bodies of water. And when it would rain you would have all those new springs and little bodies of water falling from what we would call a mountain, even though now since I've seen some mountains I'd call it a hill. They were mountains to us then. In the winter time

they would turn to icicles.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds beautiful.

DAY: It was beautiful and I really enjoyed it. Of course I couldn't

live through it now and I imagine young people that weren't born there couldn't take it. It would be too boring for them

and too drab, but it was exciting to us.

INTERVIEWER: I think I'd love it. Did you have to work on the farm?

DAY: Yes, we all did. That's one thing about farming, you do every-

thing together. Besides working the fields you have chores. You have assignments and everybody had responsibility in order to have a smooth operation. Especially in a large family,

it's important that everybody keep up with the chores.

INTERVIEWER: What were your particular chores?

DAY: My chores were bringing water, tending to my twin sisters. I

didn't go on the farm as early as most of my family because I was the baby sitter for my twin sisters and the baby child that was younger than my twin sisters. And I also helped my mother bring in the wood for the stove to cook the food. I'd bring the water and be sure that the children's clothes were clean, laundered and clean. I didn't do as much farm work as

the other part of my family.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you all go to school? Did any of you have to stay home

from school to work- on the farm?

DAY: No, we didn't. I don't know how we managed it. Now as I

look back over it many of our neighbors who were share cropping they didn't own their land--would have to stop out of school in March or April to start to farm. I won't say it was because we owned our farm and my dad was the boss, but we didn't, we managed to go to school the full year. Some time in the fall some of the older ones might be a week or two late

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starting to finish harvesting the farm but we that were younger started on time. I guess that was my mother's idea to have the children go to school and I don't know but I think she wouldn't stand for anybody talking about taking the

children out of school.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little something about your mother and father.

DAY: Oh, my mother was a dynamic woman without any training I

suppose, about a third or fourth grade education. She could bake without a recipe, that's what excited me so. We loved her food and with ten children in the family I never had a cold meal served in my life. And now when I'm trying to cook and we have all this instant sort of stuff I can barely manage to serve a hot meal, but she served her meals hot, the hot cereal, the hot eggs, the hot biscuits and everything we

had was served hot. She made most of our clothing without ever having any lessons. I mean we all were different shapes and heights. She made some of the boys shirts. I don't remember her making a suit but she did make their shirts and

their work clothes and she made the boys' dress shirts.

INTERVIEWER: She must have worked day and night.

DAY: I just imagine she did work many nights. Of course we didn't

have electric lights, we had kerosene lanterns. But she would work late at night and be up early in the morning working. Of course we were all up early, we were energetic children, I guess we were reared that way. I was my father's favorite and I don't know the reason why. Maybe it was because so many of the children died before me. This I didn't tell you, three of the children who died were older than I and I suppose they were glad to have me to have lived. But I was one that could sit on his lap and I guess I was a longed and looked for baby. The family just didn't get over it. He was a typical farm father. He was rather more quarrelsome than my mother. He did no quarreling with my mother but he did have a quick temper. Therefore, he left to mother to discipline us. So you know you can't say very much about a person that neverwhipped you. However I think with the grumbling sometime I'd rather

be whipped.

INTERVIEWER: But you were his favorite.

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DAY: It seemed that I could get away with a little more than the

rest. I could sit on his lap and take pennies out of his pocket and I guess he looked the other way. Pennies at that time, with us, were like fifty cents or a dollar now. We could buy penny Baby Ruths. Where are those now? I don't mean to sound like a hundred years old but it does seem like a long

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time ago and of course I'm not a young woman.

INTERVIEWER: Did your mother have a favorite child?

DAY: No, she really didn't. I guess she was too busy caring for

all of us to really have a favorite. The reason I say Dad favored me is because I could always sit on his lap and he never would push me away to go do chores or things like that and he never really paid any of the kids any special attention. I was the child to live after many died, you know. Mother didn't have time to do anything but hold that baby that was always on her lap, too. So you get a different kind of closeness with your family. Like with me, my sisters looked on me as their mother in a way because I did everything for them. As a matter of fact my older sisters' and brothers' friends used to refer to me as "Little Mama." I met one of them last week when I went back home to attend one of my aunt's funerals and she was trying to remember me and she said, "Oh, you're

Little Mama. I remember you always with a baby on your hip.'

INTERVIEWER: Did you have time to play?

DAY: Yes. I did and as a matter of fact that's one way I would

baby-sit. I would play keeping house and I would involve the children in keeping house. And I was a real concerned child. I thought seriously about what the house looked like at six and eight years old and what my sisters' and brothers' appearance and clothes looked like. I was concerned about them. I wanted their clothes mended, I wanted them to have starched and ironed shirts to wear to school and I could do

starched and ironed shirts to wear to school and I could do it even though I was small. If mother didn't have time to do it I would end up doing it. Like a rainy day and we couldn't work the farm I would pull out the tub and do laundry, so I guess I was a little more mommish like even as a child and I guess I'm still serious People accuse me of missing out on fun in life by, I guess, what I call putting first things first

and there's always some first things, you know.

INTERVIEW: That haven't been done, that need your attention.

DAY: Right. So I was that way as a child.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when you left home? Or did the whole family

move away?

DAY: No, my oldest sister and brother left home first for high

school and college. I hardly remember them being at home

because they were already away in school while I was still small.

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DAY: As I told you they didn't have a junior high school where we

lived so they had to go to boarding school for high school by

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living with a family in the city.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they go for that?

DAY: They went to Stillman Institute. I guess it was a junior

college and a combination of high school. It was not [an] accredited college but blacks went there because there were no other colleges for blacks in the city. They were certified to teach and this is where my older sister and brother went. They didn't live at the dormitory, they stayed with some of our ex-teachers that came to the country to teach us, who would take them in. We were not all at home at one time. All of us finished high school. For high school years later, we had a

bus pick us up and take us to high school.

INTERVIEWER: Well, then tell me when you left home and how you left and

whether other members of the family left at the same time.

DAY: No, they didn't. I left for high school and I lived at that

time with my brother who was married and lived in the city. I went to high school there and then when school was out I'd go back home during the summer months and stay until school started again. I married in my last year of high school and at that time it was quite a practice for the girls and boys to marry and go on to school but I think the school system decided they were not going to permit too many married students to go by the time I got married. But I went on and finished

that year out.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to live with your husband and have a separate

home?

DAY: No, no, we were secretly married. When I went home after

school was out, I thought I'd still keep it secret and go on to high school the next fall. But my husband came up and announced our marriage and brought the marriage license with him. Of course then I went to live with him that summer.

INTERVIEWER: Was your family upset or were they pleased?

DAY: No, they approved because they knew him and they liked him.

The problem was that I didn't go back to school that fall.

INTERVIEWER: What was your husband doing then?

DAY: He worked at a paper mill that made brown paper that is used

to wrap goods.

INTERVIEWER: Like paper bags?

DAY: Like the brown paper bags, but it was the sheet that you wrap

packages in. I visited the paper mill once when I was in high school. It was a school visit. I didn't know my husband at that

time.

INTERVIEWER: How'd you meet him?

DAY: Well, my brother rented a house that belonged to his family

and he would pass by and talk with me. He knew my brother and his wife. I can't remember when we really met first, but I know one day I was sitting on the step nursing a cold. I had an awful cold and he stopped by. He said, 'What's wrong with you, little girl." I was sniffling so he went to the drug store and bought some cough drops, cough medicine or

something and gave [them to] me.

INTERVIEWER: So he started out as your protector.

DAY: That's right I suppose. Then he would stop by and say hello

to me from time to time. I don't remember really--I think there was a basketball game at my high school he came to and I think I danced a couple of times with him and from time to time he kept talking to me and it was a kind of on-going romance. The house that my brother rented, we bought it after

we were married, We still have it.

INTERVIEWER: You rent it?

DAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the first house you lived in?

DAY: No, no we lived in one of his brother's houses. He had

several houses that he just let us live in and of course that was in '40 and in '41 the war broke out and in '42 my husband

was inducted into the service.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have children early in the marriage?

DAY: Yes, I had one daughter, the only child. She was a year old

when he went into the service in '42 and when he went in the service my mother was worried that I wouldn't eat or wouldn't care for myself so she insisted I come back home which I did. We never did set up housekeeping in Alabama any more. When

he came out of the service we came here.

INTERVIEWER: But all during the war you stayed on the farm.

Yes, with my parents and younger sisters.

INTERVIEWER: And you had your child and you helped out with the others.

DAY: Yes. I helped out with the chores. As a matter of fact

a pleasure not to have to baby-sit. And my sisters were just

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DAY:

delighted to have a baby to care for. I never had to attend to her anyway, they just loved her. I was glad when my husband returned and I left because they were spoiling her beyond my control.

How old was she then? INTERVIEWER:

DAY: She must have been about almost three years old. She had

> her third birthday here. Most of my older brothers and sisters were already here in Chicago. My mother's family was

here too.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they live?

They lived on the South Side of Chicago, they had moved to DAY:

Chicago years ago.

I see, her brothers and sisters? INTERVIEWER:

DAY:, Right.

And then your older brother and sister began following? INTERVIEWER:

Right, so then I came with my husband and the baby. The DAY:

war was not over when my husband was discharged. He got a

medical discharge.

So then I suppose he got a job here? INTERVIEWER:

He worked in a defense plant for a few months. He really didn't DAY:

> work very long in the defense plant, therefore 'we lost out on the money that everybody was making. The baby was too young for me to work while he was in the Army and we were getting a monthly allotment, it wasn't very much to live on. My husband worked about six, maybe nine months in defense plants before they closed down at the end of the war. And of course when the war was over they just closed like the next day almost.

INTERVIEWER: Before we leave the South completely, are there some other

> things you want to tell me about life in the South, other influences in your life? Was your family active in a church

or the community?

DAY: Well, yes my family was very active in church. Of course

> church wasn't in the next block-we had to go almost the same distance to church as we went to grammar school but we went to church. The churches in the South do not have service every Sunday; they have Sunday school every Sunday. And they rotate services. The area I lived in, the church services were the third Sunday in the month. Another church the property was given by my grandmother because it was on Taylor that's my maiden name, Taylor [the] services were

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DAY:

second Sundays. But we didn t go to that church, we passed that church and went to another one. So the-first Sunday in the month services was at a not so nearby church, then another church near there had services the fourth Sunday. So I suppose people would travel from their church to visit other churches. I don't know the reason why, but that's the

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INTERVIEWER: What denomination was your church?

DAY: Baptist. Some of the things that influenced me in my life

were some of my teachers, especially my home economics teacher. She was an instructor of our 4-H Club work. She took an interest in me and would take me on trips and would give special sorts of recognition to me or would help me to do special things. In parades we would go right downtown, we'd have parades and the band and everything and I would demonstrate different things in home economics. I had another teacher in high school that took some interest in me. I used to write poems as I thought, and I don't remember what they were at this time, but she sent several of them off and they were printed and I got a little recognition on that. And I think teachers as a whole, where families are large, if they take an interest it helps because families can't take an interest in every child individually. My grammar school principal, he had an impact on all of us in the county. He was like a father and a parent to us. There were many times a parent would not be able to go in public where the children were all the time, but Professor Holly was always there and we'd better do right or we'd be reported in the devotion the next morning. He was a minister so I guess he carried that religion kind of into the school. He did not permit us to date older boys or school dropout boys; he wanted us to date people our age and boys that were in school. And he would not necessarily talk about us personally in public devotion but he would get up and say things like, "Oh, I don't know about some of the young people." And he would say, "My, my, my, my, it really hurts me to see what some of these youngsters do." And we'd know he was talking about us so we wouldn't do it anymore. We were the shy generation I guess you'd call it; we weren't like children are these days who don't care what older people think about them. We wanted older people to like us and I suppose they'd better like us or Mama would give us the strap.

INTERVIEWER: Mama was tough, huh?

DAY: Yes, yes, and older people could tell your parents things

you did and they would listen to it. Now, of course, it's different. But we would get called on the carpet for what an older person would tell our parents, so you tried to do right all the time as much as you could when you were out in public. Professor Holly encouraged us to go to school, he encouraged

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DAY: us in spite of being poor to go to school. He had a

withered hand. A tree fell on him when he was a child and he only had one good arm. He was from a poor family and I guess he just worked his way through school and he would let US know that we could do it too if we wanted to. And he would say don't worry about the food. Food just stuffs your stomach and clouds your mind, and he would tell us to study before we ate at night and keep away from all that meat and stuff, eat vegetables. He did things for us that I imagine parents didn't have time to do, having a lot of children. And not only children but the chores they had to do, make things

from scratch.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other community people that were particularly

important?

DAY: We had our family, we were somewhat proud of the Taylor

family so that was our community, the cousins and all. We'd

boast about the Taylors. And we had respect from other

people that were not a Taylor.

INTERVIEWER: So you really had a reputation to live up to.

DAY: Yes, that was very important. You could go anywhere around

there and if they found out you were a Taylor you got

recognition. I came to Chicago and I was just another little drop in the bucket. It seemed to be, you're a Taylor, so what?

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little about moving to Chicago and how it seemed

after you'd been used to living in the South.

DAY: To be honest with you, I guess I was about nineteen or twenty when I

came to Chicago. I hadn't finished high school, as I told you. The only time I'd been away from my home town was when my husband was at an air base in Mississippi and he brought us to live in the town near the base. He got an apartment for us and I lived there for, a while before he went into the hospital to be discharged, I had not been away from home before. I hadn't seen anything but houses, nice clean lawns, clean water. I had not seen an apartment building and when I came to Chicago I couldn't imagine what it was like with other people living in the same building. I went into an

apartment building on Thirty-third and Wabash. I think I stayed

up in the building two weeks without coming out.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't go down?

DAY: Well, where do you go when you go down? You didn't have

a yard to sit in. So I stayed there for about three weeks and of course I had the baby, My husband got a job at the stockyard.

But I just didn't go out, I just couldn't pull myself

together in the big city with the El zipping by and smoke in

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DAY: the air, pollution and all that. I didn't like it but there

was no work available elsewhere for my husband. He didn't.

want to go back to the job he had before he went in the service. Men were that way when they came out of service, they wanted

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better jobs. He wanted better wages and we came here.

INTERVIEWER: Was he happy at the stockyard?.

DAY: Yes, he was happy with the money. I can't say we were

exactly happy because we were small town people, you know. But all my family was here. I guess after I was here about a year my baby got the whooping cough and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know doctors or anybody here. That seemed to be

the hardest part for me.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

DAY: My sister came to get me and took me to the hospital, but

then I had to rely on everybody to do everything for me. I had a lot to learn, I had a long ways to go. Finally the following year I got a job in a grocery store working two

or three hours a day.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do with your little girl then?

DAY: It was a neighborhood store and he would permit me to keep her

right there in a little family room he had behind the store. When I wasn't waiting on customers I'd go back and sit with

her.

INTERVIEWER: How old was she then?

DAY: She was over three.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you do that?

DAY: I didn't work there long because the baby caught the

whooping cough and I had to guit and stay home with her.

INTERVIEWER: Now, where did you live?

DAY: It was on Thirty-third and Wabash, it was with my older sister...

INTERVIEWER: Was she married, too?

DAY: Yes, she had one daughter. Finally I moved, as a matter of

fact, in this neighborhood near where my office is now, and

that's where I really started to work.

INTERVIEWER: And how old was your daughter then?

DAY: She was four years old but she was in school. She was four that

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DAY: fall but she would be five soon and they took her in school

because she wanted to go. And my mother had taken ill and came to live with me. When she was ill my father would send her to live with us. She kept the kid while I worked. And of course when she got better and went home, my brother and his wife lived in the same building and kept her for me. It wasn't

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easy.

INTERVIEWER: But you always had family somewhere around?

DAY: It wasn't easy though because I did all the house work and

then getting her dressed for school except her top dress, you know. I'd give her her bath and put her underclothes on her and do her hair and then let her sleep because I had to be at work at eight and she didn't go to school till nine. My sister-

in-law would get her up and give her breakfast and get her

off to school.

INTERVIEWER: So what was your job then?

DAY: I worked at Montgomery Ward and Company. Now that was an

interesting thing. When I went out looking for jobs they would say things to me like, "What kind of experience do you have?" And I thought how can you get experience without a job? I looked every place and no one would take me. When I got to Montgomery Ward I just said to them, "How are you going to get experience? All I ask is to give me a chance and whatever your probationary' period is, if I don't work out then you let me go." So they said okay. I just like laid heavy on them. They hired me and by that time I had gone back to high school. I was going to school evenings at Wendall

Phillips, my husband and 1. And we would take our daughter- to my sister-in-law or to my sisters and we'd go to school and then we'd pick her up. We would be about nine o'clock getting home. Well, I was to graduate that following June, that was in March then, and they hired me on probation until I

graduated. I had to bring a statement from the school that I would graduate from high school. They didn't hire anybody

unless they had high school.

INTERVIEWER: So now you're working full time and still going to high

school. You must have been busy.

DAY: Yes, but I was younger, so I could do it. I did graduate and

just about the time I was off my probation. I had gotten a promotion and I was doing some kind of clerical work. I was assignment clerk over about twenty or thirty young women, not as a supervisor but giving work to them. That was in '47 and

I worked for Montgomery Ward and Company until 1955.

INTERVIEWER: That was your launching pad.

DAY: Yes, that was my launching pad. The union came there to

organize they had a lot of trouble organizing Montgomery Ward.

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13.

INTERVIEWER:

Yes, during the war, was that before you were there?

DAY:

That was before I was there and it was another union as a matter of fact, but when this union, my union, came in--I never will forget they had so many girls punching the clock at one time clock. They were black-girls and minority girls and the last person that punched in, in that six minutes time, would be late. There were other clocks, too, but it appeared to be their policy to have us all--the blacks--punch there.

INTERVIEWER:

You mean segregated clocks.

DAY:

Yes. Now we must go down, way down the river the full length of the building to punch and then some of us would work there but some of us would come back up where the other clocks were to work. That's where I worked as a matter of fact. You'd speak to the supervisor about the long line and she'd say you ought to be at the head of the line and this is all that she would say. But inevitably somebody would have to be late. And for eight o'clock in the morning we'd get off the elevator and we'd walk a mile to get to the clock to punch on time. You had all that distance to go so you ran. And the union passed out a leaflet saying that the black employees at Montgomery Ward and Company have to walk a mile down the river--they call it a mile because it is spread down the river -- to punch in for work while there are plenty of places for them to punch before they get there. And the union just passed out that one leaflet and that afternoon I had a note at my clock that I had a new time clock number and that I should punch in up there where I worked.

INTERVIEWER:

So the company really changed fast.

DAY:

And we didn't even have a union at that time, they were just trying to organize. Well, I didn't know anything about a union; I'd never worked before. I took the card home and asked my husband about it. I'd had two or three of them but after this happened I asked my husband about it and he said, "Oh, I didn't know a union was out there." I said they were trying to. He said, "Let me tell you one thing. I will never work at a place where there isn't a union. Sign the card." So I signed the card and a few days later a representative from the union sent for me and said she'd like to see me. I didn't go and she sent for me two or three times by one of the committee persons that she knew. And I still didn't go, I was so busy going home to see about the kid and going to see my mother who had become pretty ill by that time and she was then with my sister. So finally I went down to the union hall to see what the representative wanted. She just kept sending for me. She said when I walked in, "Well, I'll be damned, I thought you were fat."

INTERVIEWER: Why?

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DAY: Well, since I've been an organizer I think what really

happened was that she was trying to pull a cross section of people, as committee persons, and she had plenty blacks and whites. She probably thought I was an Irish woman or something and she couldn't think of anything else to say but

14.

she thought I was fat.

INTERVIEWER: That's funny.

DAY: But she liked me and they kind of hung on to me and they

put me on the committee. Eighteen months later we were in negotiation and they put me on the committee. That was the Policy Committee which met with the Negotiating Committee. And as soon as we got recognition from the company in our first contract, President Don Peters sent for me again. I came down and he asked me to come work for the union to run that office near the members. This was a branch office near the company itself. When I was asked to come work for the union, again I said well let me think about it and I went back to my husband again and asked him. After thinking for a while, he said, "Well, unions have always been representative of people and they look out for working people. I can't see how you can go wrong by working for them, I'm sure they'll be fair with you." I went back and told them I would come down. They wanted me to come immediately because they were going on organizing drives in other parts of the country. I came down there that morning and everybody on the organizing staff left and went to New York to organize the Wards there, the next day. Here I'm in an office and I didn't know anything about it. I went back to school again.

I went back to learn clerical work in college.

INTERVIEWBR: Where did you go to college?

DAY: I went to Crane Junior College at that time down in Jackson.

Now it is Malcolm X, I believe. And I went to take typing, bookkeeping and all the things that would cause me to know how to collect dues. I took English so I'd know how to write letters and all the things we'd have to do. It seems that they were kind of deserting the office and I would have to be number

one there,

INTERVIEWER: What was your title in the office, did you have a title?

DAY: At that time, I was a clerical person.

INTERVIEWER: This was in 1955?

DAY: Yes, but the hours were long. I've never been a nine to five

sort of a person, Our clerical staff has always worked from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. But I was so interested in the things that the union was doing and I could see them getting into all sorts of problems

for people that needed them. Not only did they negotiate

contracts, but they were digging into the political arena helping

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DAY:

set people on the right track so that they could help themselves; they weren't just limited to what they were obligated to by the negotiated contracts. Of course, at that time the trend was beginning to start on the Civil Rights Movement and unions were in that head forward, you see, putting bodies there. I'm kind of getting ahead of myself, but I guess around '63 Governor Kerner appointed me to the Illinois Commission on Human Relations and President Donald Peters was so impressed with me having that appointment that he, at that time, began to cut me loose from a lot of my responsibilities and kind of let me have time to improve my knowledge on human rights and keep up to date on legislation so that I would be a better commissioner. But getting back to the clerical bit, I handled grievances in that office there. And people paid dues to me, about 3,400 people paid their dues to me.

15.

INTERVIEWER: Oh my.

I had to collect those dues and I just made it a practice, not DAY:

only taking the dues and writing it up on a sheet but giving them a receipt to prove that I received their money. And I would come in on their lunch hour so that they wouldn't lose any time, or before work or after work. So it gave me, long days or hours but I was too wrapped up to be concerned about whether I was getting overtime or not. I was not concerned about that or the right kind of salary or all that kind of thing because I had faith in the union that they would be fair to me and I just didn't even bother to think about it. When I look back at that now I just wonder how I did it. I remember a steward coming in on a grievance and I had the phone under my chin talking and typing up whatever she or another person

had given me and she was telling me her grievance.

INTERVIEWER: Three different things at once?

Three different things. So in the conversation she said to me, DAY:

> "Nothing disturbs me more than when I'm talking to someone and they're not listening." So I immediately asked the party to wait and stopped typing and I said, "But I'm listening to you." She said, "How could you?" And I told her everything she said. She said, "I'll be damned, you did hear me."

You had terrific control there. INTERVIEWER:

DAY: Well, it just grew on me. You know you had to do it. Nobody's

> in that office but you, and you just have to do it. You can't have people overstaying their lunch hour or they'd be put on probation and I'd have a grievance. So I had to get them out of there in forty minutes time. I hardly ever missed our membership meeting. We had a membership meeting once a month and I seldom missed one. Out of my 23 years there I think I probably missed one or two membership meetings. I was always concerned about the union and its work.

16.

DAY INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: How did things change at Wards after the union came in?

DAY:

For one thing we had departments where menworked, that was the thing of the day, where blacks worked and where whites worked. After the union came in, we got job posting. We got training for our stewards and we were close to our stewards. We'd hold membership meetings, therefore the white and black stewards got to know each other. They realized that whites were not bad, they all were not evil against blacks, and whites realized that blacks were not all the things that went on in their mind. As a matter of fact I've had some of the whites to say to me, "I've never been around blacks before but since Clara has been down here and I got to know her, I don't know a finer person in the world." And at that time the majority at Wards were white. At that time I was a union representative and this is what they thought of me as. They didn't see me as a woman or as a black. There was a problem, they wanted me to handle it, and this was all they looked at. But one of these days I imagine they looked around and thought, hey, you know, that's a black woman I'm dealing with. They'd never seemed to think about that all [that time]. After we had the job posting, the stewards all were concerned about qualified people getting the better jobs. They didn't show any racial discrimination. If the job was open and they did not give it to the person who signed for it and was qualified they'd help that person file a grievance. And out of that we got all of our departments integrated. With qualified people, we didn't ask them to take people who didn't qualify. We had a training session there through what was at that time the Human Resource Department. The City of Chicago got teachers to go out and give training to men and women in typing, filing, anything, so that they could advance from that everyday order filling, if they wanted, to go into clerical sort of work. I've seen them change from having sweatshops where supervisors said if you don't like the job you go home -- the members had some place to go; I've seen supervisors get fired because they were so abusive to the workers, the grievances were so severe there, that management decided it couldn't afford that supervisor anymore. Going to arbitration and losing the cases caused them to change their style. I've seen gains of pensions for our workers and of course most of them now that were along in 1955 are retirees. People 25 years later retired with pensions. Just shortly after we got a contract there we discovered so many of our people selling their souls to loan sharks. They had so many loan company deals that life just wasn't worth living. They didn't know where to go, they had to get a loan to pay the loan. And we organized our credit union. Many of them that had small bills, we would have them combine the bills and get a loan 'from the credit union and pay them off. It caused them to be more independent, more dignified; it caused them to send their children to school. A former director of the Women's Bureau in the Nixon administration was one of our credit union student borrowers. Her father sent her through college with credit union loans.

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DAY:

She calls me Mama wherever she sees me. Her father was a Puerto Rican and they lived just across the alley from our office. Her father wouldn't do anything until he came and talked to "Mrs. Day" about it. She'll tell anybody when she meets me, "This union sent me to college."

INTERVIEWER:

So it really made a difference in her life.

DAY:

It made a difference in the lives of so many people, being in the union, the contract, the negotiated contract made a difference.

INTERVIEWER:

How did the Teamsters happen to organize Montgomery Wards?

DAY:

Well, you see we are a warehouse, mail order employees union, and at that time we already represented Aldens and ,Speigels and what used to be Walter Fields, so the Teamsters per se have jurisdictional crafts. There are grocery store crafts, candy factories crafts, et cetera. We happen to be the mail order and warehouse group. They have some that are truck drivers, some that are municipalities, so we just affiliated, my local, with the Teamsters back in1941 or '42, when the Teamsters were part of the AFL-CIO.

What about these other large stores like Sears? Would they be

eligible to belong to your union?

DAY:

We've made several attempts with Sears and I can't say what the problem is but the last time I worked with the organizers we discovered that the older employees who were there had a good profit-sharing, but they had many others who were never kept on the payroll over five years and you must be there five years before you get profit-sharing. Therefore there was a heavy turnover at the bottom.

INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEWER:

So they can divide the old against the new workers.

DAY:

That's right and you go to organize them, they would lay these new ones off. This is what I discovered that one time.

INTERVIEWER:

When Wards was being organized there was no particular

problem?

DAY:

Yes, there was a problem. We started out in '53.

INTERVIEWER:

Alright, tell me about the difficulties in organizing.

DAY:,

There were difficulties. We negotiated for eighteen months to get enough cards to have an election and then they threw in clerical people. When we went to the Labor Board to ask for recognition they said the clerical people should be a part of this bargaining unit. We thought at that time that the white collar [clerical] would vote against us but they didn't, of

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18.

DAY:

course. We won by 87 per cent. I never will forget.... That was a time when everybody was hugging and kissing everybody at two o'clock in the morning when the votes were counted. My husband was standing down in that lobby waiting for me and somebody saw him and they didn't know him, they just ran and hugged him. We won with a lot of work, but the retail store which was across the street -- it's a funny thing the way white collar workers used to work there--it was hard for us to even get to talk with them. We brought in some handsome men from all over the United States and let them hand out leaflets at the retail, store and the women were glad to see them, you know. They could talk with them, "Hey, hello there," you know. We got cards just that way. Then when they the clerks discovered that union people made more than they did, much more even though they got by on that "white collar sort of a bit," they thought they couldn't take that to the grocery store, So white collars didn't mean that much to them any more. So we had the election with the retail store and the mail order house at the same time and of course when we started negotiating we negotiated for eighteen months. It seemed the coldest days there were, and I don't know if it was because I was not dressed warmly, but standing by that river handing out leaflets in the morning it was so cold. And we used to go down for negotations at night and the company would sit by the table and prop their feet up--you know you have to bargain in good faith-and they would sit there every night and wouldn't say anything. We would present demands and they'd say no to everything, would put their feet on the table facing us. I remember the chairman of the board would sit back and put his foot on the table. We were his employees but he had no respect for us. And I remember we'd get so mad and disgusted sometimes and we would call a meeting and we'd bring some dynamic speaker like Harold Gibbons from St. Louis, Missouri and Harold would come on with that rousing sort of togetherness speech, telling what unions can do and what they will do, "we'll hang in there and we'll lick them," and that kind of stuff. At times, we who were on the Negotiating Committee would go to work so disgusted sometimes, especially those of us that had never dealt with negotiations and didn't know the name of the game. We just thought we'd never get a contract. "Oh my God, we're going to lose and here we. have those dogs in there and they're going to fire all of us." It was really disgusting, but the first contract was just a foot in the door. We who were on the committee really just didn't know how to go about talking to the people about it, to encourage the members to accept control. I said to my husband, "I think I'll stay home." He said, "No, go on, you know you got to face them one day.' So as I went in to work the following morning there was the union out there handing out leaflets explaining it, so that took the pressure off.

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INTERVIEWER:

Now when you went to work for the union, you were Still a member of the same local and you still are and you still go

to those meetings?

Yes.

DAY:

INTERVIEWER: Even though you've risen up in the hierarchy?

DAY:

Yes, I still go to the same meetings. I would say almost all of our staff came out of rank and file, including our executive board. Our executive board was the original chartered executive board from back in the late thirties out of Butler Brothers. They

organized a union there and that's where we have come from and we have elected them year after year. Most are retired

now except three.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, now we've moved you into a new job working for the union.

DAY: Yes, I was an office clerk and after I went to school and I did

take shorthand. I wasn't a whiz at it but it did give me a chance to be a secretary because I did all the typing for the branch office. I first worked in the office with a worran and then after about a year or two she left. I can't remember whether she left to do more organizing or whether she left

743, but then a trustee was assigned to that office.

INTERVIEWER: What does that mean?

DAY: That meant that an older employee was there with me; they didn't

let me work out of that office by myself, there was always someone in and out of there but they had other responsibilities as well. He would drop in from time to time and try to spend as much time as he could there but he had other companies that he had to service as he couldn't stay at the office. So then I served as his secretary, you know, I did other things, too, so I guess that was a little higher job rate than office clerk. And just about the early sixties I was promoted assistant Business Representative. I was not the business representative there but I did most of the work. The business representative was the one that'did the negotiating of the contracts and grievances too. I would do some of the grievances but he was the business representative so letters went out over his signature. I served, then, as his assistant for about five years and that was as far as I could go at that time because

the union couldn't use two business reps there. Then later on I did ask to be transferred where I could make more money, and with me belonging to all those boards that had started snow-balling, [I] was appointed Director of Community Services by President Donald Peters. The Mayor Richard Daley asked that I come on the Commission on Human Relations of the City of Chicago. Well I was already on the Governor's Commission so

I said to the representative of the Mayor, "Let someone else serve," because I really didn't think I wanted to serve on two

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DAY:

commissions. His representative told him what.1 said and two or three weeks later he had gone and talked with Don Peters, my president. I was told he said, "I can't find another Clara Day in the city of Chicago. I want a labor representative on the Commission, I want a woman and I want a black person and there is no other such person. Could you twist her arm?" So Don asked me to serve and I said to him the same thing I already told them, "You know I'm already on one commission. I don't want to spread myself too thin where I won't be effective." So Don said, "Well, I'll give you time, you can have time to do the things you need to do." And of course I was serving then on the Commission of Human Relations with the city of Chicago and with the State of Illinois both.

INTERVIEWER:

Now you better tell me about the work you did on those commissions.

DAY:

The Commission on Human Relations for the State of Illinois is somewhat like an education sort of a commission. There are twenty of us and we're appointed by the Governor, we handle all discriminatory cases but without statutory powers. We just appeal to the agencies and so it's more an educational sort of thing. Like discrimination, let's say in the State Highway Policemen, we would appeal to the Chief of Police, whoever that top person might be. Or we might refer it to the Governor or to the State's Attorney or somebody like that, but it is an appeal without powers.

But the Commission on Human Relations of the City of Chicago, when I went on it, it had power on discrimiantion in housing because of race or religion; it has statutory power. You could get licenses suspended for real estate brokers on apartment buildings with more than two families. And that was our power about three years or four and then we got--I really ought to explain how we had the statutory power.. We could recommend to the Mayor to suspend licenses of people that had real estate licenses. And of course if they were operating without licenses we would report them to the state and they would have to get licenses. We had the statute amended to cover what we called "Mrs. Murphy's rooming house" and with that amendment [on] any act of discrimination [you] could file a complaint. Then I believe it was in 1973 I testified before the City Council along with another commissioner to have the ordinance amended to include sex, So now we have it to include discrimination on race, religion, national origin, and sex. And we found that many of our cases were by single people because of sex or marital status. So we had it amended to include marital status, too, and we found discrimination against single people, not necessarily women, but men as well. Well, it is felt that a single man will have a lot of people coming in, having women staying over, and many times they will

utilization of material (see legal release)

DAY: not rent to men.

INTERVIEWER: I've heard of lots of discrimination against single women with

children, fear that they can't pay the bills and all that.

and they feel that their other tenants might not like it, that

21.

DAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But I didn't know men were discriminated against.

DAY: Yes, men are. They say men have too many people staying over

the present tenants might move. Speaking of discrimination, against children, I was surprised with the State Commission on Human Relations when I found out that since 1868 there has been a law that says, "no discrimination against children under twelve years of age." And when I saw that phrase I said, "Oh [it must have been around 1969 or something], you've got the wrong date here, it should be 1968." So that law had been there all the time but not enforced. So we kind of activated that law and when people would discriminate against children we would say, "You know it's against the law to discriminate against children if they're under twelve years of age." But the most awful sort of a case that I recall was two women wanted to rent a place with a combined income, they were students, and they said they were turned down because they had income of only ninety dollars a week and the rent was something like seventy dollars a month. That was some time ago. Anyway, most of the commissioners were middle class white men and didn't know what it was like to be able to stretch a dollar, and they were about to say you must have at least one week's pay to cover rent, that's an old kind of yard stick that they use.' And I said, "Yes, they can pay that." They said, "Commissioner Day, how can they pay that with ninety And I said, "Well, my God, black people not only pay rent, they send kids to school and buy homes, too. They know how to stretch a dollar, so listen to me." And I guess that they

money."

INTERVIEWER: I bet she appreciated that.

DAY: What they didn't really understand was at that time the average

black person did not make as much in one week as they paid in rent. Blacks pay more rent than other people anyway, other than other minorities. But it's a thing that was lived with and

felt that I'd experienced this, so they said, "Let's see what happens. Let's rule probable cause and send it on for public hearing." One of the commissioners: went home and told his wife about it and when he came back to the next Commission meeting he said, "I told my wife what you said and I think I ought to have you go home and talk with her and tell her how to manage

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we know how to not eat steak. Buy soup bones! So these are DAY:

things that my fellow commissioners didn't understand.

I can see why it was important for you to be on there. Were INTERVIEWER:

there any other particularly good cases?

DAY: Yes, we had a case where they didn't want to combine the two

> women's salaries to qualify they were sharing the apartment. The commissioners- felt, without thinking, that well, one of them might move away. And some of us at that time of course around that time we had put on some more minorities called to their. attention that when you have a man and a woman husband and wife working they take into consideration the combined Salaries and that a woman can leave a man any time or a man can leave her. No way do you have any guarantees that any two people will stay together. You've got to get a lease or get as many documents as you can to tie them down to getting your money. But we had some cases on panic peddling that were very interesting. We used to have the Austin area people come down to our commission meetings on panic peddling. Panic peddling is when a real estate broker will say, hey, to a black family, there's a house to rent or sell here. Then he would go back to the white community and say, "You better go, they're coming." So Austin at first was fighting back, they: wanted a real estate license suspended for panic peddling. I must say that community has worked toward trying to stabilize this community. Because of that we got panic peddling laws in Chicago. In a changing community they cannot put "SOLD" signs up because it would cause the white neighbors to start running. I give Austin people credit for getting that ordinance on the books and it did help stabilize the community. They used to come in in droves and just fence us in. We would be in a small room and there'd be so many of them--they'd bring their children that we couldn't get out of the room. They would scream at us and they would say all sorts of mean horrible things and some, of the commissioners really panicked. They didn't know if they were going to be attacked or not. Finally we had to have police in for security and we asked the police to let them raise hell if they wanted to but just stop any physical violence. Those of us who tried to understand felt that they might have a legitimate grievance, but of course we didn't feel that we needed to be given any bodily damage because of that.

Did the police ever have to intervene? INTERVIEWER:

DAY: No, they never had to. Maybe they should have many times because

they were abusive to us but we asked them not to.

INTERVIEWER: How many were there twenty on the commission? 22.

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utilization of material (see legal release)

DAY: There are fourteen on the Chicago Commission.

INTERVIEWER: How many of them are black?

DAY: Around that time we had two blacks.

INTERVIEWER: How many were women?

DAY: Me. But I got to know the people in Austin, and I came to respect

them and I think they felt the same towards us; that they learned that people were pushing for survival. In their community,

23.

they [the blacks] were-seeking something better and they had moved into a better neighborhood because they wanted something better. But I could understand their point of view because many blacks who moved there, their income was so low that they would have to rent to so many people in order to meet the mortgage.

The houses were sold to them, as they proved many times, for twice as much as they were worth. Therefore they would pay more than their white neighbors for the building and maybe they would have to cut it up. I could understand their [the people in Austin] position. They came to understand their [the blacks] position. In the long run they were together and right now it's a community.

that's doing a comeback. They're working on crime now because the communities that were broke up in the inner city Austin is in Chicago, but it is a suburb--moved there. They had to deal with crime. I live in Lawndale, we don't have crime anymore.

There are fewer people, they're moved away; there are fewer houses because they're tearing them down. The blacks who moved for better lives had to find that, "Here I am in the same thing that I left." They decided to join hands and fight back, make

it a better place for all of us to live.

INTERVIEWER: How are they dealing with crime?

DAY: They're marching on the Police Department just like they marched

on us.

INTERVIEWER: To make the Police Department concentrate on their area?

DAY: Right. They're marching on City Hall about the rats in the alley.

I kind of appreciate what they're doing there.

INTERVIEWER: So I take it that these two commissions, especially the Chicago

Commission, have really been an important part of your work.

DAY: It has been important because we receive those housing discrim-

ination cases and I have to review them and make an unbiased

decision and I do try.

INTERVIEWER: How much time does it take?

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DAY:

We're in our Commission meetings from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. review the cases, if you do speed reading and you can absorb it and the phone doesn't ring, you can go through them it's according to how many you have we have as many as twenty cases sometimes. I don't think I have one here now but some of them will be two and three legal pages long. It takes time to read them and then you have to go back and interpret what they really say to try to be fair with the complainant and with the one that responds. You have to be fair with both of them, you have to be sure that you are following the ordinance to a tee. Sometimes they are discriminating but it's not a part of our ordinance so we have to refer it to the State's Attorney or other agencies. For instance, we all know that blacks are exploited. At one time they were selling plots of land to them telling them they were going to build a house on it and this real estate broker would sell the same plot to somebody else. They would go there and it wouldn't be a lot. It wouldn't be anything so the State's Attorney had to track this group down. Then they changed their name and they started operating again. But it was not under us, we would refer it to the State's Attorney's office. We'd know that they were doing it to minorities, Puerto Ricans and blacks and Appalachians, because they were not city slickers. We knew that but we couldn't do anything. They'd ask us and we would refer them to the proper agencies. The Chicago Commission is over all the city agencies as far as discrimination is concerned, their pattern of hiring, promoting within the city agencies itself.

INTERVIEWER:

That seems like it could be almost a full time job all by itself.

DAY:

It should be but what really happens is we have a staff. We have an investigator in each category of housing, of employment, of education, so the City of Chicago has a staff and an office and they do the leg work for us and then they bring back the facts to us for our approval. We make the decisions. 'I understand when the Commission was first founded in 1947, the Commissioners did the investigating themselves. Dr. Preston Bradly was one of the founders, but I understand they went out and did their own investigating.

INTERVIEWER:

That must have been a real muck-raking group.

DAY:

That's right. It had to be a person that was self-employed because a person who is working for a living just couldn't give it that much time.

INTERVIEWER:

Does the union permit you to use a lot of your union time on this?

DAY:

I spend all of my commission work on union time. I never have signed in, I've worked the hours that I needed to. What really happens is that when I'm out my works piled up so. I just, stay

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DAY INTERVIEW utilization of material (see legal release) 25.

DAY: down here at night and do it.

INTERVIEWER: So you really work overtime.

DAY: I always have. I've never worked an eight hour day as a matter

of fact. I'm down here at eight o'clock a lot of evenings.

INTERVIEWER: So in a way this is extra, even though the union .

DAY: They picked it up. They permit me to and if I can work it in

my schedule it's quite alright.

INTERVIEWER: But you always have to work extra in order to do it.

DAY: I've always worked long hours in order to service our members.

You can't just let their grievances go.

INTERVIEWER: What's your official title now?

DAY: Trustee and Business Representative and Director of Community

Services.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, now we're going to talk about the union structure here.

DAY: Yes, I want to go back and pick up where I left off where-1

was an assistant business agent probably about twelve years. The president of our local established what is called the Community Service Department and along with the Community Service Department and the boards and committees that I serve on, I'm a Board Consultant to the Chicago Urban League. At that time I was serving on the Review Council of the Community Fund on allocations to agencies, and almost any place where organizations wanted to have some labor input, they asked the president for a representative or they asked for me personally, The president would permit me to serve on these boards so long as it was Community Service Department and services to our members. I call it representing our members beyond the plant gate and outside of the negotiated contract. We realize that all of the needs of our members could not be negotiated in the contract

and that their problems did not cease once they left the plant gate. Of course now we have our "title" updated to include clerical, technical and professionals. We don't refer to it as the "plant gate", we refer to as "beyond the work place", because we work with clerical', technical, and professional people as well. My greatest endeavor was when Martin Luther King was assassinated. Segments of our community were burned out and people didn't know where to go. They had no clothing, they didn't have anything and they would call the union and I would get in touch with agencies such as Community Referral, Catholic Charities,

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DAY:

the Salvation Army, or any agency that I could find to help them and give them clothing and a place to stay. That was my first big task as Community Service Director. Of course from that point on I still gave service to our members. have a strike, let's say, and the members do not have the full salary any longer or strike benefits, I refer them to the Food Stamp Program. I put them in touch with how it operates and I talk to the people there, cut some of the red tape' so that the people that work in the office know that the people are not just in there by themselves, that they've got somebody back at the office, that if they're not treated right that they will call and talk not only to that office but talk to the people downtown about abuses. So I serve in that area. I also serve when our people have fires. I find clothing for them, refer them to boards that can give free legal service, you know. Like our commission, we have an investigative department there. Many times workers don't need a lawyer, they just don't know that they don't need a lawyer, so I send them to our commission office and they talk with the investigator there and many times they would refer them to the right agency to get the same type of help they would receive if they hired a lawyer. Many times our members buy a car, and they change their minds and try to cancel the purchase and are refused. In the meantime, just a call from headquarters, from the Teamsters, will make the dealer change his mind; he realizes he doesn't have just a little worker to abuse. I recall one particular place where a member bought a car. He put \$300 down on it and he really couldn't afford it, he couldn't afford the car. And then he went to borrow the money to make the down payment to get the car and he discovered he couldn't. He tried to get his money back and they would not give him any of it back. It might have been legal but then I called and I appealed to them that this was a person who had to change his mind because he couldn't pay for it anyway and asked to have the money returned. He said he was not going to do it and I said, "Well, then I'll be right up there," and he said, "Wait just a minute, hold on, send him back here." And he did, he gave him all his money back but \$25.

INTERVIEWER: It was the clout of the union.

DAY: Just a call sometimes will cause a change of mind on the issue,

you know. We try to refer members to keep them from going into the loan agencies, We try to refer them to a bank when they're going to buy a car or going to buy major things, to make a loan through the bank. There are just many things that I can't think of right now that we do, anything they call us for.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like a horrendous job!

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DAY:

It is and it's more than I can handle now-that I'm servicing members, but I keep it on a part-time basis and I refer them briefly. I used to keep a file on them' and do a follow-up to see if it came out alright, but now I say to them, "You call me and let me know if things work out so I won't have to call you." Of course I'm now servicing members and I'm out negotiating a contract, that's what I'm getting paid to do. I kept the community services for about eight years and then some of our Executive Board members retired. President Peters appointed me to serve out the unexpired term of that officer. Then I ran for trustee and was elected by the membership to the Executive Board.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like you may be doing three people's work there.

DAY: I have three assignments and it does cause me to work long

hours.

INTERVIEWER: Do other people do that, much work?

DAY: I don't know. I'm sure they do because President Peters' philo-

sophy is "Serve our Members" and members have no mercy when it comes to calling on us. But it's just that other staff members have the responsibility of the contract only and I have this service that takes me away from the negotiated contract. Then

I have to come back and pick up from there.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds as though you may be doing three full time jobs.

DAY: I do have three responsibilities. Another thing I didn't tell

you about, I pulled together a group of volunteers and about 25 of our members, which goes back for some of them almost

fifteen years, they have charitable activities; For the last five

years they have visited about seven convalescent homes each Christmas time. They spend Saturdays and Sundays, starting in December, visiting convalescent homes. They spend almost a day at a convalescent home taking gifts or candy or something

they can eat, a bar of soap, a wash cloth, wool socks, and

a piece of fruit. They also take with them gifts: for the oldest person, for the one that has a birthday close to Christmas, for the youngest one. They try to do things like singing with them, getting them involved in something to make them laugh. They

spend almost a whole day at the seven convalescent homes leading up to Christmas. I coordinate the program and keep their files for them and do some of their letters. They are what we call the Community Service Volunteers, that's a part of the Community Service directly. The other one is serving on boards in behalf

of the union. Right now we're participating in the Chicago Urban League Fellowship Dinner. That's one of the most outstanding affairs in the city of Chicago other than our stewards banquet, which we have once a year. We fill up the ballroom at the

Conrad Hilton. I served as co-chairman one year and we raised \$189,000. The tickets sell for \$150 and President Don Peters

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DAY:

served as the vice-president of the Chicago Urban League, and I do his leg work. Now this comes off Saturday and we just finished selling about eight or ten tables at \$1,500 each. I don't do as much as I used to because I don't have the time to do a follow-upon the people I send the invitations to. Many of them say, "Why didn't you call me?"; this year I don't have time to do that. So I'm just finishing that up and that's part of my Community Service, too, to serve on those boards and the other part is servicing our members beyond the plant gate, so there are three parts to Community Services.

INTERVIEWER: It just sounds like an overwhelming job.

DAY: I enjoy it even though I'm tired. I don't know how long I

can do that.

INTERVIEWER: What's your average work day?

DAY: My average work day over a year's time would be about ten hours

per day.

INTERVIEWER: Six days a week?

DAY: Sometimes seven. This week-end I've a training session for

HELP at the University of Chicago Center of Continuing Education.

And Saturday night I've got to go to the Fellowship dinner.

INTERVIEWER: So it goes on and on.

DAY: It goes on and on. I think I've got something on Sunday too,

I can't remember, but it does go on and on and there's no end to it. I have to do this community service work as a part of representing the union there. Like the-Jewish Labor Committee, I serve on that board. We just had our Civil Rights Conference Saturday before last and I chaired a panel. so you go to these Board meetings and when they have something on Saturday or Sunday you must go. Last weekend I left Friday night going to Washington to attend the National Committee on Household Engineers, it was the sixth national meeting. Another commission I serve on is the E&mission on the Status of Women. There are sixteen of us and each of us chairs a committee that relates to a segment of women in the State of Illinois. I chair

the Labor Union Women's Committee which chose to push for

legislation to include household employees and domestic workers. First, of all we made available to such workers their rights under the federal law and we held a public hearing last year.

Let me talk about some of the things that bother them.

*Hospital Employee's Labor Program

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DAY:

We were concerned with their relationship with their employer we want to arrange some sort of coming together of household employers who might be interested to find out some of the things that domestic workers need to know and see if we could do some training.

That must be the hardest group of all to help; they're so totally

decentralized.

DAY:

It is, you don't have a central employer to deal with. All

of them are individual employers.

INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEWER:

Are they unionized?

DAY:

They're unionized where they go through agencies. A woman testified. at our conference this weekend that the city of New York responds to some group or other, I don't know whether it's the Housing Authority or what, to employ domestic workers. receive some funds, then this group gets other funds. organize there because they've got a central employer, many people come together under one employer. Nothing has been done on an individual level except in communities, a Council may be organized. They get together and maybe they can get CETA* money to do the training to teach them cooking, home-making, sewing. Some workers become trained so they can move out into And then they affiliate with a national organization which is funded by a foundation and administered through the National Urban League. There is an Executive Director on the national level and a staff person that they can work through to help set up committees to help get training. The weekend before this I spent a day in Washington with the Coalition of Labor Union (CLUW), an organization of union women which was founded in 1974 to deal with our own problems of discrimination.

INTERVIEWER:

What is your role in CLUW?

DAY:

I'm a national second vice-president and I'm a founding member. At our founding conference, there was this big fight between the Teamsters and the Farmworkers.

INTERVIEWER:

Yes, I remember.

DAY:

CLUW was to be founded for women, not to deal with the problems our union had, but the feeling was so strong at that time for the Farmworkers that they just couldn't keep it out of the' meeting. So then the Teamsters' delegate said we knew our union wouldn't permit us to participate if CLUW was going to deal with the issue of the Farmworkers because we were competitors, so we said we could not belong and we were to walk out. They didn't want the Teamsters to walk out so they said, "Let's see what we can do." So all night long I stayed up, my husband was down with me at the Pick Congress Hotel. I didn't eat, didn't rest

DAY: or sleep.

INTERVIEWER: They had Delores Huerta as one of the speakers, didn't they?

DAY:

Delores came in but she didn't stay and she didn't speak. But she had Josephine, I forget what her last name was, she was a local person. And along about two o'clock in the morning the conferees were saying nobody can solve this but the Teamsters and the Farmworkers: So I said I'd meet with, the Farmworkers' women and we'd talk and see how we feel. So the Farmworkers' women said yes, they'd meet. And they of course lived out in the community somewhere, where they could sleep in sleeping They didn't have any money like some of us. So they agreed that they would come down and meet with me at seven o'clock that morning. And of course they had to travel from way on the North Side or wherever they were to get down to that hotel where we were staying. We met on neutral ground at the Hilton. We talked and I guess I talked more than Josephine did because of the language barrier. She apologized for her language. And I said to her, "I know that there are differences in the field and I'm not about to say that it ought to be Teamsters or it ought to be Farmworkers, not as far as CLUW is concerned, but I feel that you and I have more to bring us together than to keep us apart." but I said to her frankly that, "The issues that are between- our unions are going to be resolved by the men at the top. If they decide that they want to stop fighting they aren't going to ask you and me for our opinion about it. We could be down here wallowing in mud and fighting among ourselves and we'd still be fighting. They probably won't even tell us they're through fighting and gotten together. We'll still be fighting and they'll have gone on to be buddies." And of course that is the way it happened. Josephine said to me, "What do you want me to do?" And I said, "The only person that can stop it is you. The AFL-CIO people and UAW, too, are determined to have resolutions passed against the Teamsters..."

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that was the problem.

DAY:

They were determined to have resolutions passed against the Teamsters. They wanted resolutions and if they had resolutions in support of the Farmworkers, then we'd have to leave. I said, "You are the only one that can do it. You will have to take the stand and say don't pass any resolutions against the Teamsters or for the Farmworkers through CLUW." And I understood-that she needed them and I said, "They can help you outside of CLUW but not through CLUW." She said, "Well, I want you there, too." Well, the day of the final conference meeting she and I were supposed to take the stand. In the meantime election of officers was being held and somebody wanted me to run for regional vicepresident. That was going on in another room.. The people were out on the podium and Josephine was talking. I wanted to hear what she said because it was being recorded and if she said anything against the Teamsters then I couldn't take the stand, I really couldn't because that would go against me.

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DAY:

over there and I told them I want to run for regional vicepresident and I ran back to try to hear what Josephine was saying. And they would say, "Okay, we're going to be to you in a little bit and each person had to make a one minute speech." I ran back over to see 'if they'd gotten to me and I ran back trying to hear what Josephine said. I would say that when they found out she was going to take a stand, the little trouble makers we call them, all of us now, we in the union, were so upset they were saying, "Who gave you authority to change your mind?" Well, you know it was her baby and they were really upset with her. And I said to her one time, "Josephine, I'm running, trying to get elected. Why don't you go?" She said, "No; I'm going to do what I come to do. I've got three more people I want to talk to first and if I don't get it done, I'm going to do what I promised you I'd do." Well she was saying to them don't put in any resolutions against the Teamsters and she did ask them not to pass any resolutions against the Teamsters through CLUW. And she went on to say that "We've got more to pull us together as women." And in her own sort of way I guess she had to make her pitch and she said, "But we do need your help. Please help us.' Well, that was kind of damaging to me because she, did ask them to help--but not absolutely destructive to CLUW. The only thing I said at that point was that I joined her in support of all women, that we are representative of all women in the field. Then she stepped down. She had a cast on her broken arm. And it was on the front page she embraced me with that one arm. And that was when everybody started singing "Solidarity Forever" and held their hands up. That was the front page of the paper with Josephine and me standing there holding up our hands.

INTERVIEWER:: Do you have a picture of it?

DAY:

I've got one someplace. That was the founding of CLUW and of course, wanting to pass some resolutions for the Farmworkers went on through our next year, but we survived it. Then the third year, of course, the Teamsters and the Farmworkers at the top got together and we had no more problems. How proper and fitting it was that week-end before last at our national CLUW Award and Fund Raising meeting in Washington, awards were given to people in the four areas: organizing the unorganized, legislation, promoting through the rank and file, that I was chosen to present the organizing award to Delores. And she said, "It's proper- and fitting that Sister Day and I stand here and she presents me with this award." She said, "Many of you know what I'm talking about." So everybody was thrilled again that here we are as women, that we put all of these things aside and work together.

INTERVIEWER: And you did take the job, the regional vice-president?

Yes, I won it. I won the election, running back and forth and DAY: I covered that section out there, too. I served as regional

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DAY:

vice-president that next--I guess it was more than a year, about eighteen months. And then we had our next conference in Detroit, that was our constitutional convention. We drew up a constitution and it gave regional vice-presidents thirteen states, and you know, without staff and full time jobs and no money, It was impossible.

INTERVIEWER:

This is what I've heard, that people who took those jobs had nothing except what they could swipe from their unions.

DAY:

That's right and we borrowed from our unions. I remember at the founding conference I had come back to the office and got reams of paper from my union. I'd run stuff off for CLUW in my union office. The day of the conference we had one of the women go in to her union office and get reams of paper. We just needed it, we'd borrow the paper, we had no money. And the Pick Congress Hotel let us take that hotel without a dime on account. We paid them but you know you've got to take your hat off to them for the credit they gave us.

INTERVIEWER:

They trusted you.

DAY:

That's right. They were just as concerned. Bea Abercombie was in charge of catering at that time and I guess she had a certain sort of warm feeling toward women, to see us struggle so to try to cause CLUW to be born. She stayed down with us during the conference.

INTERVIEWER:

How do you feel about CLUW and the way it's gone?

DAY:

I can say we're still suffering from growing pains but I can see since the founding conference, many national unions have women vice-presidents on their Executive Board that didn't have any before. Of course I'm on my Executive Board. I was the first woman to be elected to the Executive Board. I've seen things change for women in that time. But again here we are with unpaid staff to try to do everything that needs doing such as organize a chapter there back in August and I have to go on the weekend to meet with women. I spoke at the Indiana University Labor School there and the women were so concerned about CLUW I said, "If you'll stay after the session I'll show you how to form a chapter."

INTERVIEWER:

Did they form one?

DAY:

They certainly did. About fifty women stayed and about nine-teen of them signed up that day. And then they wanted a meeting place so they could call it the Northern District of Indiana. We tried to organize chapters small enough where traveling isn't too far, but yet sometimes you don't have enough active people to have it so small and therefore we have to reach out like over to South Bend, Michigan City, and Gary. So we had to try to get a meeting place that was centralized for all of them, They thought Michigan

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DAY:

City would be better but they didn't know anybody there, I was in Washington that week talking to someone in my International office and they said they had gone to Michigan City to dedicate a Teamsters building. I said, "Oh, you did, when, where, what, who?" They told me what local it was and I came back and I looked the local up in my little roster and called the president and I said, "I'm one of the trustees from Local 743 and I heard you had a building dedicated." He said, "Oh yeah, you must come to see it some time." I said, "How about next Saturday?" Then I went on to tell him what I wanted to do, I wanted the union women to meet there. "Have you heard about CLUW?" He said, "Yes, I've heard about it," and he did let us meet there. He came down as s matter of fact and opened up the hall for us and opened the kitchen with all the facilities there and told me to stay as long as I wanted to and he left. And he never met me before. Of course I was a Teamster.

The first thing we did after CLUW was born, we met with the three National and International presidents, the big three: Meany, Fitzsimmons, and Fraser from the UAW--I don't know if it was Fraser -- anyway we met and they all endorsed CLUW in their own sort of a way. And after we got their blessings then we could deal with the locals because they had a feeling if International presidents approved it then we must not be a body to destroy them. And our objective was to work through the framework of our own unions. We don't get involved in jurisdictional disputes. If one union has got a picket sign and another union is trying to organize too, it's hands off. We don't deal with issues in local unions. The things we confront ourunions with is we need to promote women and things like that. That's still in the framework of our own union. We try to get Teamsters women strong enough to speak out to Teamsters themselves. We try to give them courage and educate them and make them aware if they want something they ought to ask for it. Who knows? They just might get it. We work strictly within the framework of our own union so our unions are not really afraid of us to the extent they think we're going to destroy the union and put a picket line around it. Most of the officers of CLUW are top people in their own unions so we are union minded women. And men, too. In the Teamsters I would say a fourth of our membership is men.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really!

DAY: Teamsters men belong to CLUW and a lot of men from other unions,

too. They don't come to meetings like we do, they don't come to

conventions but they do pay dues.

INTERVIEWER: To show moral support?

DAY: I suppose so. They pay dues and of course they pay our expenses

for meetings, which is a lot because we meet sometimes every month or at least every six weeks. The national Executive Board, which

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DAY:

is the governing body between conventions, meets at least three times a year. So that can get quite expensive traveling to

Washington, to San Francisco, et cetera.

I don't know where I left off with the union but I think I

worked up to where I'm on the Executive Board now.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's where we'll pick up next time.

INTERVIEWER: Shall we begin with your rise to the Executive Board on your

own union?

DAY: Yes, I think I told you last time that our Executive Board was

the original Executive Board until members became the age to retire. They were elected continually because they gave service through all those years. And after they started retiring then the Board started to pull back some of the old regulars, some from the rank and file and some like myself who were already on the union staff. I believe our staff is just rank and filers, they come from plants we organized. Most of them are stewards, the loyals you might call it, dedicated and sincere and service oriented, So we hired them for staff, organizers and business

agents.

When I think back to Community Services, one of the particular

assignments that I had was . . .

INTERVIEWER: No, you didn't talk about that.

DAY: I suppose it was about four years ago I was appointed to the

Commission on the Status of Women by Senator Partee who now heads up the Mayor's Human Services Department. And I'm somewhat involved deeply there. The commissioners head committees, did I tell you that? I think I told you that I head the Labor Union

Women's Committee.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, you did.

DAY: Then I don't need to repeat that but I am rather fond of that

committee because it reaches out to certain women in the State of Illinois that nobody's concerned about. Since I talked with you last something exciting has happened. A representative, a staff person from the Phil Donahue Show called me and said that she had been referred to me to talk about domestic workers. She wants to have all the 250 domestic workers that are in town

there to see the show.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's marvelous!

DAY: And, however the show might be she wants it dedicated to domestic

workers, I told her that we didn't really know how to reach out

to them. We know they're there but how to reach them.

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INTERVIEWER: Are they organized at all?

DAY: No, they aren't organized at all. I understand that there's a

national committee. However, a woman that serves on our committee heads up a domestic service called Maids To Order, and they're hired right out of her office.— And she not only sends them home, but they also do the big high rises, condominiums, and things. They are not under contract with the building,—but the building manager lets the tenants in the building know that she'll be there at certain times and if they want to use her service on an individual basis they can do that. She was effective when we wanted

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to reach domestic workers for the public hearing.

INTERVIEWER: Will the show be about domestic workers?

DAY: I don't know just what it will be, a loose kind of thing or .

maybe some person to talk. I can't really recall how the show will work but anyway she's going to have domestic workers, so we're excited about that. I've just got to find time to go to

work on it.

Back to this spot on the Executive Board, our president Don Peters

said that because of my service and my dedication and my

concern about the union and union people he appointed me to fill the unexpired term of one of our Executive Board members. In the same year my term expired and in November I was elected by the membership to the Executive Board. So I like to say I was the first woman elected to our Executive Board and of course I was

the first black person to be hired by the union.

INTERVIEWER First twice, then.

DAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of unions with that many men still don't have women on

their Executive Boards.

DAY: No, and we do have to take our hats off to Don Peters because

he has always pushed for a representation of a variety of people. All groups are represented on the staff and it makes for a good

relationship with our members when they come in.

INTERVIEWER: Now what about this Commission on the Status of Women?

DAY: It is an appointed committee. It is made up of sixteen commissioners,

eight public members--private citizens like myself--and eight legislators who are appointed by the Speaker of the House and by the Senate, with the Republicans and the Democrats having the same number of appointments. We don't have any statutory power. We started out with a budget four years ago of two thousand dollars, two thousand dollars to run an office, write an annual report, attend meetings. If you want to be effective in an organization

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DAY: you have to attend all the meetings in order to broaden your

knowledge to gain input into your own committee. So each year we would ask for a higher budget and it seems that the legislature thought that's a little nothing commission. So that same year Dan Walker had what he called "accountability sessions" around the state of Illinois. When he came to Chicago I asked the governor, "What about this commission receiving a budget of one cent per woman in the state?" Well, that was his year of cutting the budget 6 percent and he said, "No, I'm recommending the budget be cut." But before he left office we were able to get it up to \$60,000 which was in 1965. That constituted 1 per-

cent per woman in Illinois.

DAY INTERVIEW

That came in 1965. That was quite a change. INTERVIEWER:

DAY: Yes, we didn't just jump there, that was over the years. Our

> budget request now is \$100,000 because we have to do all sorts of things. We travel around over the state to hold commission meetings and it gets to be quite expensive with sixteen commissioners. There are meals, too so it takes up quite a bit of money to attend twelve meetings a year. If during the year as we check our budget the money is running low we'll take one month off in August or maybe December. But not this year because we have important hearings with the Education Committee and we have to get together to make our reports which are recommendations to the

Governor and the legislature.

[The recommendations call for a code of work requirements for household employees which include a statement of the minimum wage; coverage under worker's compensation; quality child care; quarterly statements for employees showing earnings, deductions, and employer's contributions towards Social Security; equal pay for work of equal value; W-2 statements provided by the employer; and mutual agreement on fringe benefits such as paid vacation, paid sick leave, severance pay, and method of payment.]

Did I tell you about the young man that headed the Older Women's Committee? He is a young man, a legislative member, but he chose the Committee on Older Women.

INTERVIEWER: I don't think you did tell me about that.

DAY: Well, we're excited about Commissioner Bowman. He's a young man,

about in his thirties, and that was his choice. But he had problems

with whether he should call the committee older women. He knew what his intent was but he didn't mean to insult anybody or turn them off. So we said we would help him, but we ended up deciding

there was just no other word for an older woman.

INTERVIEWER: That's not an insult anyway.

It's not. Many of us that live that long feel lucky when we DAY:

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think of some of our friends who didn't. His committee DAY:

> helps a woman who returns to the labor market, maybe because her children are grown and she's alone, her husband has died, or maybe she's divorced. All these things could cause her to need a job. She might have lost her skills, her skills were fading or she was out of touch with the public, you know. These are

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the things that I hope we can deal with.

Do you think things will really change, then? Do you have real INTERVIEWER:

legislation in mind?

DAY: Yes, yes. He will recommend in his report changes for older

> women, things they might need. I don't know just what he's found yet because he hasn't turned in his annual report. This' is his first year. But I know that the Employment Committee is talking about flexible career training and flex-o-time or

part-time employment.

Do you think the legislature will support your program and INTERVIEWER:

his program?

DAY: Yes, I do, and of course half of our commission is legislators

> and if they approve it naturally they're going to go back to session and speak for it. They'll not only recommend it but we've got somespies in there who will know how they react to it and we'll know the ones that were not favorable and we can go into their districts and say, "Hey, he or she said this and that."

INTERVIEWER: So you're really in it in a political sense as well as an advisor.

DAY: We can expose them. And this is what we did with the Equal

Rights Amendment. It still hasn't passed in the state of Illinois, but we've got our commissioners working on it. Even

though the legislative report tells how they voted, the

commissioners are there to see how they switch and trade votes. Even though it seems they might be selling, they really aren't. They trade off, you support me on this and I'll support you on that. You cannot always support an issue even though you're for it. A good example of this is the black legislators on the Equal Rights Amendment when it was up for vote and they felt it was a political football. The pertinent issue didn't have any-

thing to do with women but we were victimized by it.

And it backfired, on them. INTERVIEWER:

Well, I don't know about the backfire. In a sense I'm sure it DAY:

> might have. I have heard that some of the white legislators said I'm not going to support some of your issues. 1 don't see how it could backfire in that respect because it is their obligation to support all citizens. It hurt us, it hurt us. And I think they made their point. I was not in the city when it

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DAY:

happened. I was at the airport when I saw the paper with the vote. I was going to Jackson Hole, Wyoming to a United States Commission on the Status of Women meeting. And of course the women all jumped me at the meeting and wanted me to tell them what's what about the vote and I didn't know anything to tell them except if it's as the paper said, the blacks did not want to be taken for granted by the Democratic machine. They had been for the Equal Rights Amendment all along and then a representative who had never supported it before was going to have a chance to introduce it and go down in history. And I'm not saying that these were their rules but I can understand. Who goes down in history is the one that introduces the bill when it's passed. Of course the black legislators will vote for ERA next time. And this is just part of what I understand.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think it will pass next time around?

DAY:

Yes, yes I do, hopefully. And we are saying not to wait for the seven years extension. Just keep full force ahead as if the end of it was June of next year. This is our intent, we're going ahead full speed through all our organizations, with our unions which have endorsed it, with our women's organizations, with ERA America and ERA Illinois, a combined sort of effort. I don't think Phyllis Schlafly carries any weight, though she'd like to have people think she's effective and dynamic. We just have to educate people how important it is and clear up the myths in their minds. To tell the mothers, who do not read the daily papers or listen to the radio because they're so tied down every day with the burden of raising children, that their daughters are not going to grow up to have to share the john with a man, for example.

INTERVIEWER:

Or go to war.

DAY:

Or go to war. And have them know that their daughters if they had been of age, could have been in World War I or World War II. At eighteen, a citizen, if needed, would have to go. Other myths they're spreading around that women would have to lift heavy things. Men as individuals don't have to lift more than they can, you know. Let's start at the top and work down. Let's talk about women in the executive positions. Let's talk about the position where you don't lift anything, just your ability to work with your mind. But the first thing people say when you get into ERA is okay you're going to have to lift heavy things. They don't say you're going to have to be president of the company. They start at the most ridiculous sort of thing. You want to wear the pants or you're down with men. You don't like men. My favorite phrase is that we're not "down with men." Some of. my best friends are men. They're whom I love, my father, my husband, my brothers, and if I had a son, my son. And I'm about that as I am with civil rights. I reach out to men to help. I reach out to many

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people. In the civil rights movement I reach out to my black DAY:

and white sisters and brothers. We want to do it together.

We've got to work to get rid of false images.

How are you going to do that? What can you do that you didn't INTERVIEWER:

do before?

DAY: Well, we're going to have to getserious about it for one thing.

> We're going to have to boil down and digest the contents of the law itself, what it really says. And we've got to pull together a good question and answer form. I believe the National Organization of Women has a question and answer sort of thing that's not long and complicated. It states things like, "Will you have to go to war?" Answer: "No, you don't have to go to war. You'd have to go to war at any time that Congress decides you have to in a time of crisis." "Will you share the bathroom?" "No, there's no legislation that states you must share the, bathroom. But we share the bathroom at home with the whole family and on the airplane, but if we share the bathroom there are locks to use." But each state has the right to impose its own laws. It will be the next five years when the states get through complying with the national on their own terms. So it's not taken out of the hands of the states. Phyllis says that the government is going to be running our whole lives but the 19th Amendment says that it has no right to discriminate on account of sex,

et cetera.

So you've got plans. INTERVIEWER:

We've got plans. We're going to get to our universities, we're DAY:

> going to get to our union?, we're going to get to our blue collar women, and our pink collar women, we're going to get to the white collar women. We're going to bring them together into one union to talk about it, to sit down and face it. I was on a radio show last Friday with two other women, Susan Catania who is the Chair of the Illinois Commission on the Status of Women and another woman who is the president of Housewives for ERA in the state of Illinois, and we were talking about this. Of course I was there as a black woman, however I'm the first vice chair of the Illinois Commission. We're going to work through the Coalition of Labor Union Women which has a hook-up

all over the United States. They're very concerned about Illinois and we'll make Illinois a priority, zero in on it. But women will come in from other states; they have before and they will again through the Coalition of Labor Union Women because

we branch out through all the states.

INTERVIEWER: Of course in Illinois we have to get more than just a majority

vote.

We have to get two-thirds. DAY:

Yes, and I think that's why Illinois has been such a hard nut to INTERVIEWER:

crack because other states have not all had to do that.

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DAY: It has been but as we were talking on this radio show and

someone asked Representative Catania, and she said it could be introduced in the General Assembly as a [resolution] and if it passes to have a simple majority then we have a better chance

40.

to pass the ERA.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, they can introduce a resolution to have it accepted by

a simple majority?

DAY: Right. And if it's passed then we can have a simple majority,

the only thing about it is getting enough votes to get it passed.

INTERVIEWER: Do you belong to any other organizations, do you belong to NOW?

DAY: Yes, I have served as a consultant to the Chicago NOW but because

I'm so very busy I don't have time to attend the meetings.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any others that you belong to?

DAY: The League of Women Voters. I served as the Secretary of the

State League for almost one term. I got so busy I had to resign before it was up but I'm a member of the League of Women Voters and the Citizen Information Service which is I guess the tax

exempt arm of the League and I'm their trustee.

INTERVIEWER: So I assume you think of yourself as a feminist?

DAY: Yes, I think of myself as a feminist and I must clarify the

kind of feminist that the bandwagon, the anti has jumped onto and that is the braless sort of woman--down with the bra and down with men. I don't know how that got to be the main kind of feminist but this is what people think of when you say,

"I'm a feminist." I'm for women, for equality for women if they can do the job, I'm, for the Equal Rights Amendment, I'm for men pushing for the Equal Rights Amendment and all the things that go with the feminists. in that particular sort of way. And I believe that the majority of women are of the same feeling. I believe that bra burning was just something that was whipped

up.

INTERVIEWER: In your experience have you had greater problems as a woman

or as. a black person in terms of discrimination? Which seems

the hardest?

DAY: Oh,, I think I would have to say as a woman because I lived

through the civil rights period, the 1960s and I could see gains as a black person but then it seemed that the doors were closed when it came to being a woman. I really think that being a woman

is harder.

INTERVIEWER: You think the race issue has-made more progress than the sex

issue?

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DAY: Yes, it has made more. And it's so hard for me to really define

it because being black and a woman too you have to really try

to sort it out.

INTERVIEWER: Yes I know, you're under pressures both ways.

DAY: You have to sort it out and say I wonder if I didn't get [it]

because I was a woman or I didn't get it because I was black. And of course I look around and I see black men in spots but I don't see any black women there. Of course I do see white

women. Then I go back to the phrase "it's because I'm black and a

woman." You just can't separate them. So if you see a black man there and you're not there you will almost have to say

it's because I'm a woman.

INTERVIEWER Do you think that black men sometimes feel that the feminists

are putting too much emphasis on women at their expense? Have

you run into that?

DAY: I think so and they're justified in doing it because now

black men are just for black women. And of course as women get equality then black women will get equality. If black women get the same equality as white women then somebody's got to be at the bottom. And if society still feels that you got to be there because of your sex or race then it would be the

black men.

INTERVIEWER: So you're saying it is a real threat to them.

DAY: It could very well be a threat. It could mean jobs being lost,

just like in the civil rights movement Therewere many whites who said it and I don't know if they had ,a base for it or not but to get equality then women are justified in it because they have to have some of those jobs. So you have to try to understand

the black men trying to protect their own interests.

INTERVIEWER: What's the solution?

DAY: The solution is simply equality on the basis of ability to do

the job. And as I've said many times before somebody's got to be at the bottom, but let it be because of inability to do the job not because of race or sex. And you will find many people at the bottom, black, white people, poor people, rich people,

you see.

INTERVIEWER Did you want to say more about your union job? I don't know

if you told me all that you needed to tell me or not.

DAY: I'm just trying to think. I think we were at the point where I'm

on the Executive Board. At the time I went on the Executive Board there were two of us put on the Executive Board. We didn't

run. One was already a business agent and of course I was

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DAY: Community Service Director. The Community Service Director,

even though I covered all of our members and services all of our members outside of the contract, has not been valued in the same way as a business agent and I have never been able to figure it out. It could be because we never had a Community Service Department before and there's no place for it to be measured from. It could be I guess because the union's only obligation to members is in terms of the contract and as long as I was not dealing with the contract at that time.... However, I had dealt with the contract when I was an assistant business agent and I did lots of the work. The business agent and I got along well and worked well together but too frequently I was looked on as just an office girl or a secretary. I did a lot of the work and gave it to the business agent to present. When I became Community Service Director, there were no job standards saying it pays this as a job grade 10 or 11, even though the services to the members equaled that of the contract in a way, because problems of the members outside of the contract just had to be solved for them to be able even to go to work, to get a baby sitter or to get someone in a convalescent home. All of this helped members to be able to work. The position just had not been evaluated. However I have the feeling that once I don't have the Community Services -- two people will have to be in here I think the union Executive Board will probably think seriously

INTERVIEWER: Are you saying that you don't expect to keep the position you

of putting a job grade on it and a price on it.

have now?

DAY: I can't very well keep it because I am a full-time business

agent.

INTERVIEWER: So now you're doing both.

DAY: I'm doing both.

INTERVIEWER: You're a full-time business agent and you're a Community Service

Director.

DAY: I'm doing both and of course trustee is nothing more than doing

the books once a month. That really doesn't take time.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get separate pay as a business agent?

DAY: No, I just get one salary.

INTERVIEWER: You get one salary for two jobs.

DAY: One salary.

INTERVIEWER: You're doing a lot more work though.

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DAY:

And I'm not doing an effective job as a Community Service Director because before I was a business agent I was able to keep records, keep notes and follow up, refer calls and then follow up on them. Now I just refer members and tell them to call me and many of the times.1 do not keep a record of the calls. But before I had a book and I could ask which month and flip back and find everything. I could compare the services. I could follow a person through a period of time. So I'm not doing an effective job as Director of Community Services. However I still serve on a few boards. That was a part of my job, to serve on boards and I still do, the Welfare Council, the Allocation Committee for the Welfare Council that allocated funds to places like the and the Urban League. I serve on that board and I review the report each year- and as a part of a group we recommend what their budget should be, what they should be doing, cut back on certain items in their budget and approve some. That was the top of the union, but when I started servicing members I had to drop all of these sort of things and then I lost contact with people. So I made the decision to cut down on my committee services except the two commissions and where there is a community based organization such as the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission which is the organization that runs the Martin Luther King Center--gives the budget that runs the Center--1 stayed with that and of course many of our co-unions. So I don't sit in on the negotiations because it would be a conflict of interest.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a secretary?

DAY: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have the part-time use of a general secretary?

DAY: I have the use of a--you wouldn't call it a secretary either

because it's one person and there are fourteen business agents so we minimize our typing. I keep a typewriter with me because I can do a little typing but I try to minimize my typing. But I am responsible for sending the letters to the companies and the answers I get back to my members when I send the dues receipts to them, especially when there are grievances with wages involved. Plus I have the contracts, to

negotiate and they all expire in the same year.

INTERVIEWER: She might be pretty badly overworked, too.

DAY: Well I'm sure we are all. I must admit I think we all overwork.

I look at many other offices where each department or each office has its own secretary, nobody's secretary looks that busy. But we operate a little bit different so I guess I'd say we all overwork. And now we're involved in an organizing

campaign at the University of Chicago.

*YM/WCA: Young Men's/Women's Christian Association

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INTERVIEWER: What are they trying to organize, the clericals?

DAY: The clericals. The first day they 'were surprised at the union

handing out leaflets.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I wish them luck.

DAY: The election is the 17th, it looks pretty good.

INTERVIEWER: There've been a number of efforts to organize there. Have the

Teamsters been in there before?

DAY: This is the first time. It is HELP, Hospital Employees Labor

Program, 743 and 73 of the AFL-CIO's Building Service Employees

44.

Union.

INTERVIEWER: The Teamsters are doing a lot of hospital employee organizing

now.

DAY: Yes, we started eighteen years ago. It seems to come on the

coldest day in the year, we get everything including sleet.

INTERVIEWER: Always the coldest day of the year.

DAY: Yes indeed. So we hit every hospital we have under contract,

all the major hospitals, St. Luke's Presbyterian. I don't

know what they call the one on the near Northwest of the Loopy-Illinois -- it has a new name now. It used to be Wesley Memorial. And of course I'm the business agent in charge of organizing.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think you'll do when you leave this present position

which you seem to think you don't want to keep?

DAY: You're talking about the present position being Director of

Community Services?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

DAY: I do want to keep it but I just don't see how I can be

effective and I don't believe in keeping something that you don't do well. I am just working myself right out of it because with contracts coming up if I'm going to be efficient I'm going to have to take care of these members within the contracts. These others will have to wait and if I never get back to them they'll

still be waiting.

INTERVIEWER: What do you plan to do, simply say I can't do both jobs, some-

body else is going to have to do it?

DAY: No, I don't plan to do that. I'm just going to do the best

I can.

INTERVIEWER: So you'll keep on struggling to do both jobs.

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DAY: Yes, yes, but I'm just saying that it's just not possible.

INTERVIEWER: You mean nobody else is going to struggle to do both jobs.

DAY: No, no, and someone needs to do both.

INTERVIEWER: In other words when you retire or when you go on to something

else. . .

DAY: It's a phase that was interested in the community. But I think

we've done it, we haven't retreated from talking about reaching our retired members, bring them in-they are our political armand see what they're doing, involve them. We haven't solved the problem of how to do that. That would, in a sense, be community service. None of us wants to lose community services, it's just that we don't know how, with the staff we've got, to maintain it.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any chance of increasing the staff? Do you have enough

money to increase the staff?

DAY: We have enough. We lost members during the recession and I

guess we haven't regained them from the truck strike, seven or eight years ago; everybody lost members because companies were reducing so they didn't need stock. So we lost, too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a lot of people wanting jobs who are Teamsters

who can't get jobs now?

DAY: I'm sure we do because many companies are going out of business

and some of them are companies that we need to replace with

something else.

INTERVIEWER: I think we didn't come quite up to date on CLUW and I wonder

if you could tell me a little bit more about the present CLUW

and your involvement in it.

DAY: I think last time I talked about how we gave awards to unions

that had been supportive of our programs and of course our programs are a union program. We work with and are funded by unions, with our unions supporting our program, legislation that we as women need through our committee structure. We have a committee structure for organizing the unorganized and we arrive on our representative to the national executive board through our union members from each union. If the international unions have a membership in CLUW of fifty members then they're entitled to one representative on the national executive board which is the governing body of CLUW between conventions. If they have a hundred they can have two. And also with each representative

they have an alternate, so if that person, cannot make it to the meetings the alternate can come. They are called union delegates. We work through our union delegates to organize the

unorganized. At our quarterly meetings of the board these

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DAY:

delegates report on what they're doing to organize the unorganized. We have a Legislative Committee that reports on legislation. They might call or send us a telegram saying there will be a vote on a certain bill tomorrow, send telegrams or talk to this person before tomorrow. They stay on the Hill. Evelyn Dubrow is our minutewoman from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. She's a lobbyist for herunion, she's always on the Hill and she keeps us posted to get our telegrams or to get our national presidents to get our telegrams off to Washington. If she has time she'll get letters off, that's our legislative program.

The often recognized women who were promoted or here appointed or were elected to higher positions in their own union, that is part of the Statement of CLUW of advancing through your own union. It was really a problem before but they're now on the national and international executive boards of many unions. It was because the squeaky wheel gets the grease and we made it known that we were union women and we wanted to be a part of the leadership, that we wanted a piece of the pie and we were told, "You know, I didn't know you wanted this." And it could very well be that they didn't know but they know it now and some think we want to dominate.

We deal with all issues that relate to legislation, not only the Equal Rights Amendment but full employment. We hold our meetings in Washington and when there are some major issues at hand we'll get a bus load and go over and button-hole our representatives in Congress. I think in that respect we do as well as any organization in the United States short of the League of Women Voters. We're very careful about getting involved the right and left sort of thing, in political parties, the Communists. Now not saying that there aren't any members who favor that political party but we don't let, them propagandize because they come from our unions and we won't take the blame for that for our union people. We don't permit them to exercise their political endeavors in CLUW. We elect national officers that will enforce that sort of a stand.

INTERVIEWER:

What's your position in CLUW now?

DAY:

I'm a national vice president. I was elected in 1977 in September. I was slated from the floor. I was not slated by the committee. I really said I wouldn't let them push me into it but they did. I said no, just give me time and I'll make it, I'll 'run another time. They slated me in Detroit two years ago and I declined. because we've got enough things to do besides fight among ourselves and I just didn't want to go to war with women. So last year they slated people on the national executive board because we had really structured our executive board. I was a regional vice president which was a part of our officers, but they knew that at our constitutional convention we structured it so that

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DAY: our vice presidents were not part of the national executive

board. They were another committee. So that position did not put me on the executive board and many felt--they saw how I worked here in Chicago that I should be there, not some new

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person.

INTERVIEWER: A new person was slated?

DAY: A new person was slated and another new person who had never

been to a meeting was slated, too. So they decided which one they wanted to run me against, and at the last minute with the majority they thought a Teamster ought to be there, too.

They had AFL-CIO but they didn't have a UAW member or a Teamster. Those are the two top unions. As long as the

Teamsters Union was saying we won't support it I was indifferent but when all those AFL-CIO women and UAW women said, "Listen we will not support you," then I gave in to them and said okay. When I was nominated there was about two or three minutes of applause from the floor. Everybody stood up and it was chatter, chatter, chatter. They finally did get it under control and everybody sat down and when the vote came I was the victor.

INTERVIEWER: That's really gratifying, isn't it?

DAY: And of course that made me second vice president. That's the

spot I ran for because it was felt that the first vice president 'had made a contribution. She had because when I was

regional vice president, she was one of my convenors in

Michigan. I don't know, I felt bad about that. I felt that the last thing we needed to do was to have some dissension between

ourselves.

INTERVIEWER: But what was the point of putting a brand new person on?

DAY: I don't know. It was explained to me but I don't really know.

And after the election was over and we were at a meeting and she had to be there--she's a good spokesperson--she said, "You know what I told Clara yesterday? I told Clara she was

going to get clobbered. Guess who got clobbered?"

INTERVIEWER: So it didn't really leave any scars. It was a good healthy

kind of situation.

DAY: Yes, it was a good healthy thing because she was a good sport.

That's good. It was a democratic sort of a thing to do. The two vice presidents, the second and the first, have equal responsibilities. It's just that it was necessary to have some numbers to identify us, it does not mean the first vice president is superior to the second. The first vice president is the Chair of Organizing and the second is the Chair of the Legislative

Committee. But these committees meet separately. We could be

called figure heads.

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INTERVIEWER: I have a feeling that you couldn't be just a figure head.

DAY: Well I try not to be. I really don't like to be a part of

anything where I'm just a name. I serve as a consultant to the Urban League and in my union, president is a vice-president, so each year for the big banquet I sell tickets which are

\$150 each. We only sold eight tables this time but it's because my responsibilities are so great that I didn't have the time to call people back. But we have sold as high as 35 tables. The Urban League is one of my favorites; it's a good organization, it always has been. It has a national policy to keep a percentage of whites in the leadership as well as blacks, at the local level, too. You have to keep so many on the Board, that's just the way they operate and it makes

for good input. They're very dedicated, I think.

INTERVIEWER: And you have a strong preference for everything being integrated

and mixed and cooperative.

DAY: Yes I do, that's the American way and once we get that in our

heads we won't have to worry about it anymore. You all are there and nobody is doing any particular looking around to see how many blacks are there and how many whites are there and being sure that you keep it integrated. It will just be an automatic

thing.

INTERVIEWER: I want to ask you one question. You have a daughter and she's

married and has a child.

DAY: Two children.

INTERVIEWER: Does she work?

DAY: Georgia worked. She was teaching when she got married and she

taught until two years later when she had Eric. When Eric was two or three months old she went back to work and had a full-time baby sitter, not a housekeeper, but just a woman who'd come in and stay with Eric all day until she came from school. Four years later Donna was born and after Donna was born she didn't work. Last year she went into the real estate business. She has a broker's license and she's fooling around with real estate now. Donna is eight. The kids are in school and of course

they ride the bus to school, they live in the suburbs.

INTERVIEWER: Since your daughter's life is so well established I can't ask

you what kind of advice you'd give her, but think in terms of your granddaughter and imagine that she's approaching sixteen or seventeen. What kind of advice would you give her as a

woman about how to live a happy life, a full life?

DAY: First of all you must learn to enjoy people but most of all

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DAY:

learn to enjoy yourself because if you're not content with yourself you're going to spend a lot of sad moments. You're not going to be able to turn back all the blows that hurt you, but if you love yourself these things aren't going to hurt you. These are things I told my daughter. She was an only child and I did the best I could teaching her because she and I have been close.

INTERVIEWER:

That's good advice. What would you advise her about marriage? What do you think about the way boys and girls are living together now? Do you think this is a healthy trend?

DAY:

No, I do not and you can call me old fashioned or stuffy or whatever you might want to call it. And I don't mean you particularly. But I believe that if a girl decided not to get married I think that should be her own decision. Why should she have to get married to have a full supportive life? But I believe at the time she decides to have a family, I believe in being married. And I don't believe in divorce as a first step in trying to solve your problems.

INTERVIEWER: So as a last resort.

DAY:

As a last resort there is divorce. But so many people divorce who are uncertain and you ought to be sure of yourself. We reared Donna, and I say we, because my husband and I helped take care of her, to do the things she wanted to do. If she wished to go out and play basketball she played ball, if she wished to sit down with her dolly she did that. Whatever she wants to do she does. She spent the first six years of her life in her neighborhood where there was nothing doing anyplace around. She played with Eric and his friends so she's pretty rough. If she wants to be a lawyer or a doctor, that's what her brother says he wants to be, she will. For a long time they said don't buy all those dishes, let's see what she wants. But I think Donna, with all the advice her mother has given her and with me as a liberated woman, I think Donna will be pretty liberated.

INTERVIEWER:

She probably will. Is there any other advice that you might want to give to any other young woman who might read this transcript?

DAY:

I think that women should not get hung up on a lot of the rhetoric that they hear. I think that they ought to be able to make decisions for themselves about the things that they feel, especially if you hear more than one version. I think that when it comes to choosing a mate, getting married, I really think they ought to be serious about it. They ought to take their time. Short-of living with a man, and I would say for young people, too, I think they ought to learn as much as they can the traits of each other. So says the Bible. If

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they do marry and find they don't share a common sort of interest and choose to stick it out because of children, then it makes for a miserable life for them and a miserable life for the children. I think that all young people ought to educate themselves, not necessarily with books alone, with books too, but with life in general and I think the young people ought to think more about American life and forget about from whence they come as a way of life. None of us lives in Europe now, none of us lives in Africa, none of us lives in Poland. And I think we ought to try to maintain our heritage, I think that's beautiful, but we should realize we live in America now, and it's a different sort of a life,

and tolerate each other.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

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