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I don't think you'd think of union leaders as coming from the Bible belt of the Annapolis Valley, which is where I came from. I was a Woodbury, WASP brought up in a right-wing religious Baptist background, but not the extreme Baptist. We were the moderate Baptist. We went to church regularly. My mother was United but later converted to Baptist. It was a little farming community and everybody went to the same church. I think there were two Catholics who went down the road to Middleton. My mother was United but eventually became a Baptist. There wasn't too much difference between that Baptist church and the United church. It was a fairly moderate Protestant religion. My father called himself a farmer. Before he married, that was when the logging business, worked in the woods with his horses. That's what they did there until the big chains came, the industrialization era. It was a fruit farm. He had 2 or 3 cows, kind of a ne'er do well, to be truthful. He would work on the roads when the Liberals were in. When the Tories were in, he didn't have work. He had a couple horses and 5 head of milking cows, a few chickens. He didn't marry until he was 40. My mother was 30, which, at that time, was a little older for people to get married.

She was a woman I thought I didn't want to be like. But I guess I'm very similar to her in a way. She was quite obstinate and pushy and maybe a little bit different. This would be in the '20s. They would be about 90 or 100 now. But she worked after finishing her school, maybe grade 7 or 8. She went off to the States housekeeping in peoples' homes and a childcare giver. She had lots of stories to tell about working in Boston. Her older sister married early and had all these kids, but my mother wasn't interested.

He wasn't political at all. Neither was my mother. I never heard of unions down there in the valley, other than the Cape Bretoners. I think they might even be the only unionized people today in Cape Breton. Everybody just figured they were crazy. They were miners and they went on strike every now and then. That's all I knew about unions. So if you had union, you didn't have jobs. In fact, in the valley still, Nova Scotia is a little anti-unionization. I'd say that attitude is still prevalent. They've tried to organize several times down there with some good unions, but have been unable to. They just keep bumping up the wages and the people there think that's good. They're not interested in unions; they're interested in jobs. They don't see the connection.

I'm not a high school graduate. Not a lot of union leaders, but some of them, like the auto workers and most people I know, are not high school graduates. But I had grade 11 matriculation. No, I had grade 11 provincial path. I hated school. I learned enough that I needed to know to pass my exams, and wanted to get out of school. I worked for a year. I finished school at 16 or something, grade 11. I wanted to go into nursing, but I wasn't old enough; so I had to work for a year. You had to be 17 to enter nursing. So I worked for a year. Then when I went into nursing I really liked what I was studying. So I didn't have

any problem studying. I found it relevant to the situation. You could study that, then work on the floor. I didn't mind studying. It wasn't that I didn't have the brains or ability to study; I just wasn't interested in school. I was interested in history. I found that interesting. But the rest of it I wasn't interested in. But anyway, I went to a one room school until I was in grade 7. This was in Tremont, Nova Scotia. Although it was a small mixed farming town, with most of them not having big wages and doing like my father, pickup jobs on roads or in the woods, there was also the influence in the early '50s of the air force. It was just down the road, a large Greenwood air force base. They took over one whole farming community down there. So you could see there were other types of people around. Even though we went to a one-room school, there were regional schools that came in. So you had the mixture once you started junior high: people from Ontario and different parts of the country. The air force people were going there. We knew they had regular jobs and paycheques. Thought they were all spoiled on the base.

I actually thought about being a doctor. This was in the '50s. I really didn't know what nurses or doctors did anyway except from reading books. But I wouldn't have the money to go to university. The nursing school I selected, at that time, most of the nursing schools were hospital-based. They had a training program. You studied a little bit and worked on the floor. In fact, they counted on the nursing students for staff. In fact I think that's what quite a bit of the change was with being short-staffed, was that when the nursing students eventually started going into university and colleges, they weren't there as workers. That made quite a crunch on the healthcare system. But anyway, that didn't happen till the '70s, which is about the time we organized and went on strike. I chose the Nova Scotia Hospital, which was a mental hospital. It would be like the Alberta Hospital here. I chose that because they paid you a stipend, maybe \$50 a month or something. The other ones didn't pay you, but they weren't like now where you had to pay a tuition to go in. I guess they recognized the fact that they needed the students to do the work. The usual complement of a floor at that time, even at the VG which is where we affiliated in Halifax, the big general hospital, the complement would be two RNs. One would be the head nurse; the other was the assistant head. One of them worked the weekend and the other one had the weekend off. The rest of the staff was students, as well as some licensed practical nurses. Then on evenings, when you were a junior student you were in charge on nights. When you were an intermediate student, which would be the 2nd year, you're in charge on evenings. Then in your third year you could be... So that's how they worked it. You worked as staff, and depending on what year you were in, you'd also be in charge on evenings and nights. But that was a mental hospital. That's what I went into because of the money, because they paid you to go there. I didn't have any money. It wasn't that much, but they gave you free room and board plus \$50 or \$60 a month. I went in training in 1960. I'd finished my schooling, grade 11 anyway, in '57 or '58. Worked for a year and went into nursing. It wasn't seen as a nursing shortage; it's just the way they did things then. I suppose it would be similar to trades. I don't know what the trades do, but I know they have apprenticeship. You apprentice with somebody. Basically they worked for free learning.

Now when the students come, there are specific things they're learning while they're working. But we were just definitely staff. They only developed a block system in my 3rd year. Not at my place, but at the university hospital. We affiliated out for a year, like to maternity and general duty. Because remember this was just a straight mental hospital, which was a big shock to me. They had locked wards. They would take the students on a tour of the hospital. I'm sure they liked to do that. They liked to scare us. Hi Jenny, how are you? It was, fuck you, I'll kill you, and all this. It was like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." A lot of that stuff was true. The wards were all locked. We didn't have any open wards. I think eventually by the time I left we did have some, for alcoholics or something. They locked them all up. They were just going into psychiatric drugs at that time. It was a changeover going from the '50s to the '60s. They still had a lot of these treatments, like for schizophrenics where they'd give them a high dose of insulin and put them into insulin shock and let them sleep. The things they did. There was a lot of electrical shock. They had a whole ward for that. We had the isolation rooms, all of that. You locked them up until they smartened up.

I guess so. They liked coming over there because they figured it was a soft touch. So we had kind of a better deal. We weren't doing the physical work they were doing. So the people from the university hospital, the Victoria General and the Catholic hospital, they would come over and affiliate for their psychiatric experience for 3 months or something. That was a big treat. They liked the food there; they didn't have to do any physically demanding work. There was very little nursing work to do, like procedures and dressings. A lot of medications to give, but basically they saw it as something where you just came over, poured the meds in the morning, played cards with them. If it was a pretty good floor, like 2nd level, you learned to shoot pool. They figured it was a snap. They all gained about 15 pounds. The food was better; they enjoyed the affiliation there, and told us we weren't learning anything. That's sort of a point, but I learned how to play poker and learned a lot about people. You'd see in the paper that day, axe murderer. Then you'd drop in on the admission floor; that's where they all went through there, to see this axe murderer. Nice little gentleman axed his neighbour. Which is still true today. If you talk to people who work in the forensic union, they're sensible people compared to the other people that are truly psychotic. Really interesting schizophrenics in there. What they saw and everything. Of course we tried to talk them out of it. I thought, you never know, maybe they were here on this earth before.

What I remember is that the nursing model was based on a military model. Now that you bring that up, the attitude there, we were kind of the lowest of the low. You had 3 levels. There was the probie, the probationer that had 6 months. You were nothing. They would be termed abusive to you now, which pretty well they are in military training too. You'd be walking along and they'd say, How are you today Ms. Woodberry? Fine. You're going to work? Yeah. Do you notice anything untoward about your appearance? Maybe we just looked downward. What do you see there? What's wrong with those shoes? You are given a stipend at this hospital, are you not? And how much is that? And how much does shoe polish cost? We were scared to death. I never learned anything till I graduated, to be truthful. I was scared to death of my instructors all the time. So we would just run and

hide. We had a good grad, the RN on the floor, and they would tell us when the instructors were coming. We'd run and hide or we'd be busy with a patient. It's actually good training when you think about it. But anyway, we'd run and hide. But if you had a good grad, they would teach you things. We had a classroom instruction and then we'd have to spend so much time on the floor. Eventually they got it so you went to class for 6 weeks and you worked on the floor for 2 weeks. We would have class; then we'd go on the floor in the afternoon. So if you were working nights, you still had class during the day, still had to go to work on nights. That was your problem, to try to get a little sleep and go out and get a boyfriend or whatever else you did. Remember we were only 17 years old. We had a lot of energy, though. So anyway, you were asking about the attitudes. We lived in a dormitory. The attitude of the military, as I was saying, is that the lowest of the low was a probie. After 6 months you got your cap; then you became junior, which was a step up. Then there was the intermediate. We opened the doors. We stood for any level above us. We did not go in the door first. You opened the door for the juniors, etc. That's how you advanced through the thing. We didn't talk to the doctors. The grads were pretty good, the people on the floor. The head nurse and assistant: remember there was only two. They were usually easy people to talk to. Or the LPNs showed us a lot too, took you under their wing. They'd been working there for years so they knew the ins and outs. What we learned from the instructors was the book part. But otherwise on the floor they didn't have people to supervise what you did. They were just interested in supervising like if there was a catheterization to be done somewhere, or a dressing because we didn't have that many as a medical floor. But the rest of the time we just basically worked; we were the staff there. It was kind of fun. It was hard work, but it was fun. You went through the same things together. But it really was training. It was kind of like boot camp. So you got together and became a cohesive group as you moved through your years. There were things like if you got pregnant you got kicked out. There was no provision for you to come back, even if you were in your last year. That was bad, you see. We lived in dormitories. We had four 12 o'clock passes and one 1:30 or overnight. You had four 12 o'clock passes and one 1:30 or overnight. So I would take my overnight at my aunt's, who was kind of religious. Not kind of, she was. Baptist. Grace was half an hour. The guy I was going out with at that time was in the navy. That way we could stay out late and come in. She liked ? because he was a nice person. We'd go over there for supper. We'd have a big long prayer, and I'd help her do the dishes. Then we had the evening to ourselves. So I had an overnight once a month, or you could stay out late till 1:30. And you had the house mother and try to get by her, all these little stories. People would leave a window open; you'd try to go in. Somebody got caught, they got expelled. There was no appeal on these things. Not even any thought of appeal. You couldn't drink or anything. But we would do things.

We weren't allowed to make mistakes. In fact, I read somewhere that if everyone else was held at the same level as the medical profession or bankers, no. we're not allowed to make mistakes. Now you can make a mistake and you get a warning. You'd be out of there. In that probation year you had to make 75% or something. They'd say, look around you, this is how many are in your class. There'll only be ?? left. They liked to scare the

hell out of the new people. Although we had this one instructor who said, I believe an hour without a laugh is lost. She actually was good. It was all about mixing drugs, which would've been a really boring thing, but we looked forward to her class. She actually talked to us like people and was pleasant. She'd joke around. Since we were there long we found all this morality and everything. This one was going with that one that we caught; what's-her-name had somebody sneaking into her room, the head administrator. They had buildings at the ? property at that time. We found out about all this other stuff that was going on. So these people weren't quite so high and mighty. They were to us, but they had all these strange relationships going on, I mean strange.

No, I never really heard of unions until Manitoba. That was the first thing they talked about. At that time the nursing profession would make recommendations to the government. We all belonged to the nursing profession, a registration body after graduation. So I never knew about that stuff. That would be in the '60s that that started. I stayed there for a year. But first I went to Ontario and worked in ???. I was engaged to a sailor at that time. So I went out there and worked in the ? for about a month or two. Then I went back to work in my home not far from Middleton Regional Hospital, which is where that Sampson was born, the guy that just came back from Saudi Arabia. There's a big air force base there. His dad was on the base there. So I worked there for a year. That's when I learned about nursing. Cuz as I said, I was too scared of these people. When we affiliated out to the General Hospital, they were just waiting for us to come because they figured, these people from the mental hospital, what do they know? Which we didn't hardly know anything about medical procedures. I remember them talking to me about doing this bed bath. They said, you're doing quite well, except you're going to have to learn to move a little faster. It should take less than half an hour to do a bath. How could you take less than half an hour to do a proper bath? I can do a bath in 10 minutes. So that's the level that we were when we went over to the ?. They would just run to get supplies in the morning, I didn't know that. Anyway, it was quite a culture shock, but I learned. But I was still scared of those people. So most of the time there we also spent time hiding. Plus the nurses there didn't treat us very well, because they thought we were stupid. Which of course we didn't know that much. Then when they came over to our place we were in charge of them, even though they were senior. So that was a little bit of conflict. So then getting back to the Middleton Regional, this LPN, she was an older person, she just took me under her wing and showed me how to do things and was nice to me. They would show you things. That's how I learned about nursing. Then I thought, this isn't so bad, I kind of like nursing. But I didn't really have a chance to know whether I did, because I was scared most of the time. I wanted to quit, except I don't quit things. I thought, I'll just write my exams. I'm pretty good at writing exams; I don't have a problem with that. I'm good at multiple choice and whatever. I can write exams. I thought, I'll write these exams and I'll pass them, just to do it. But I will never work at nursing. But then once I got out in the real world, they showed me how to do things and I had a chance to relax and look after the patients. I quite enjoyed it.

I had two days off a week, whereas in nursing I only had one. And they were pleasant to me. I knew what hours I was working, because they had this schedule. We were busy. But I knew more what I was doing. They would help you out. It was very good, and it still is, the team working. The team works together and nurses are very cohesive and work very well together, regardless of what they bring down from on high. Then and now, you generally listen to what they have to say, the latest news, and then you get together and do it the way you think it should be done the most efficiently and best for the patient. So that hasn't changed that much. We had to do more non-nursing things, I would say. You had to clean the beds after people left. Now they have a housekeeping force that does that. You were always busy. You were always just making it to your coffee break. There wasn't anything like overtime. You just did, till the work was finished. Some people do that today but not so much now. After the things they tried to do to us during the strike, a lot of people figure they don't owe them anything.

I was just thinking of Middleton. You were basically rushing around because the acuity level was higher. Then they changed things. There they didn't have any students; so you worked with LPNs. Then, when I came to Winnipeg, you were still working with students. Actually you had staffing, because you had students for staff the same as in Edmonton when I came here. Where the change came was when they took the students out. They had to hire people to replace them. They weren't planning on hiring that many people. That's where the crunch came. They still haven't replaced that level. The other thing is that they had this grand idea, when the Grey Nuns opened here in '88, they're all going to have RNs. It wasn't our idea, but it was somebody's idea. In order to do that, they were replacing 2 LPNs with one RN. The work still needs to be done. You can hire somebody that's more educated, but you've still got this level of work to be done that doesn't necessarily have to be done by that level of education.

My next stop after Nova Scotia, I was intending to go to New York. I'd already applied to go to New York to the Wayne Pitney Psychiatric Institute. I had been accepted. The person I was going with, it turned out you had to be 21 to start, for their laws for giving narcotics. She wasn't quite 21; so she deferred on doing that. So then I told them I wouldn't be there until the fall. My brother was going out west to work. I thought, I'd like to go to the Calgary Stampede. I'll go out there for the summer, probably get a job working casual. Then I'll go to New York in the fall. That was my plan. Anyway, we diverted up to Flin Flon, if you know where that is in Manitoba. He decided to get this job with Sherritt Gordon up there. He said, you can drive up there with me, to help pay the bill. You can drive up there with me. I could take the train down and then I could go down to Calgary. By the way, I never got to the Calgary Stampede. You'll find that's how I got into the union. I just drifted into these things. God called me, I guess. So anyway, as I get to Flin Flon I realize I've left my travellers cheques in Ontario. So instead of them just doing it through the bank, they said they'd send them to me. There was this bank holiday. I was in this little Flin Flon town reading the paper, had nothing to do. They had an advertisement for ? which was another part of Hudson Bay Smelting. I went for an

interview just for something to do. They're always looking for nurses. They only had one and she didn't get any time off. They said, maybe you could just help us out. I said, but I'm going to the Calgary Stampede. They said, but you could still go there next summer. Even just for the summer, ok? I said, ok, but how do I get there? The trout festival was on and there'll be lots of people from Snow Lake and they'll be going back. So I hitched a ride with this family. Remember I came from Nova Scotia, worked in the Ottawa Valley. I've never known a place where you could drive and there wouldn't be any telephone poles for miles. It was all just woods for 60 miles. All of a sudden you come into this modern little village, Snow Lake. It looked like a little resort town, lights and everything. So I ended up staying there for two years working for Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting. Just one on a shift. There wasn't anybody else, just you on a shift. Then the one who was in charge quit and they told me I could be in charge. I didn't know anything. A very young community, people having babies. I didn't know anything about it. I'd just call the doctor. He'd come over and said, this is how you examine them. ... That's what I learned. So I became the matron there. The other one they didn't like, they didn't think she would be good. There was no promotion through the ranks. They thought this one would be unreliable. I said, why do you want me to be matron? I'm just learning this job. But they didn't want whoever was there being matron. So I took it. That was my first administrative job. I was in charge of 4 employees. Making up the hours, the casual employees, but mostly it was no big deal. Mostly just working and teaching. It was kind of a good job. That's where I met my husband. He was a miner. There were only about 2 single women in a town of about 300 single guys; otherwise they probably wouldn't have looked at me. So we had no TV or anything. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday was men's curling. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday was women's curling. Sunday was mixed. There was a movie twice a week.

I decided I wasn't going to get married at that point. I was just touring around. He was going to go back to school. He wanted to be a policeman. So I went back home, and then I was going to work somewhere. He went down with me to see what Nova Scotia was like. He came back and we exchanged phone calls, and I decided to get married after all. That's how I landed out west again, in Winnipeg where he was going to go to school. 1966. I went to work at St. Boniface. First I worked at this other place, worked a month or two there. Then we went to Victoria. My husband worked in the CIL. It was the summer, and we wanted to do something different. So we stayed in Victoria for the summer. I worked at the Veteran's hospital in Victoria for a couple of months.

Yeah, it was no problem, you just called and told them. They would ask you to come to work Monday or whatever.

Always, and there still is. I don't know, I suppose it wasn't very much pay. I can't remember why. There's always been a nursing shortage. I'll tell you the real reason. The reason I've seen a nursing shortage is that you have kids or young people read those Harlequin romances where they say about the nurses and doctors. That's all they know about nursing. But nobody knows what you really do in nursing. You see on TV what

people do; that's entirely different. You've got some dirty work to do in nursing, some very foul-smelling work that other people don't want to do. Then, on top of it, you can't make mistakes. You have to know what you're doing. There's no room for error; you're not allowed to make mistakes. You don't make mistakes. Because if you make a mistake, like somebody sells me a pair of shoes, or like in the union business, I was bargaining one time telling them that. I said, if you and I make a mistake, no big deal. Maybe the member is going to get mad at me or the AHA or whatever. But if our members make mistakes, somebody could die. It's not that they're going to get disciplined; somebody could die if you do the wrong thing. So there's that. Then the shift work. Like I said to one of the students in the '70s, she was just graduating. She said, I didn't know I'd have to work nights. A lot of people can't sleep on nights. I said, who did you think worked nights? She said, I thought there was a permanent shift. So the perception of what nursing is, they don't really know. Then they get into it and they quit. Particularly today, and going through that era of the '60s and '70s, when I went in training the jobs I thought about were nurse, teacher, hairdresser, secretary. There's 4 jobs available to me. I thought I'd rather be a nurse. I didn't know what nurses did. That was the other laugh the instructors had. They asked you to write, why did you decide to be a nurse? I said, Jesus said to go in all parts of the world teaching and preaching in my name. I wanted to be a missionary nurse. They said, what is it you think nurses do? I had no idea what they did. I knew they had a clipboard; they went and talked to the patients. I didn't know they did these foul things. Had no idea. You don't know what nurses do unless you're in the hospital.

Some of them quit and some were fired. So there was about a third of them gone. But I thought, I'm gonna be there.

So anyway I worked urology. That's what somebody said. It sounded like running for president. It sounded like Hank Snow. Victoria I worked by urology and orthopaedics. That was called the Victoria Hospital, by the way, I worked there on the general medical floor. Very busy. Didn't know what I was doing. Scared most of the time I was going to do something wrong. Went to Victoria. Very nice head nurse, showed me around. It was quite the combination there. It was a veteran's hospital. So you'd have an RCMP beside a veteran. That was interesting. I went from there back to Winnipeg and stayed there till 1969. Worked in St. Boniface, on psychiatry again. I guess we were probably staffed then properly. But I was always used to working hard and fast, the same as now. It's a little different working psych; you can sit down and talk to people. But that would be sufficient staffing. But working in the general areas they weren't. But at that time, they called us to a meeting, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses. This was the thing of legislation or whatever for actually having a bargaining unit. They were going to have an actual bargaining unit within the association instead of just having recommendations. We all went off to that conference, thought it was a good idea. Sounded good to us. We had no contracts at that time still.

Because we could have regular shifts. We would know what we were working. Usually you only knew a week at a time. If you wanted something, you had to ask the head nurse. Depending on who was the pet, maybe you wouldn't get it. We wanted more money; we weren't making much. We thought that would be a good idea. And there were some questions asked at that time. Does this mean we're going to be a union? They said collective bargaining, that's what they were going to be. It wouldn't be a union, like union people.

Somebody had asked that question, but it wasn't a big consideration. Some people were married to union people. Some said, yeah that would be good; we'll get the same as the pipefitters or plumbers, why not?

We always had to have our cap on and all that stuff. One time Reg put a cap on. But he got disciplined for that. That would probably be a human rights thing. He argued that. Of course we weren't allowed to argue about anything. He didn't get kicked out, but came close to being kicked out because he wore that cap and a cape. We used to walk from there; there was this tunnel over to the main part of the hospital. He put a cape on and that cap and marched over there. They wouldn't let him wear a cap. He said, well I think it's only fair. When you're a probation member, 6 months and then you had this capping ceremony. They had a candle like Florence Nightingale. We held the little lamps. Actually, I got an award for being, what was it, something. But anyway he wanted to wear his cap and they wouldn't let him.

When I went in training, I was in the era where we had the bibs and aprons. It was a blue striped underdress and then there was a starched bib with a belt around here and hard-starched collars. That's what you wore. When you were on probation you didn't have the bib or cap. Then after 6 months you got your cap. You had to wear your cap. It had to be clean. Everything had to be clean, sharp, and polished. At that time the laundry did the uniforms and you picked them up, so they were always starched and proper for you. The RNs at the hospital I was at, their uniform was a long sleeved starched white uniform. The LPNs was a starched short sleeved uniform. The public would love this and wishes that it were true again today, I'm sure. The LPNs had a white cap with a yellow band. The RNs had a white cap with a black band. The students had no cap the first 6 months, then you had a cap with no band on. Then in your junior year you had a cap, I can't remember the colour. And your senior year you had a cap with a blue band on it. So everybody knew who everybody was. Your hair was not allowed to touch your collar. You either had to have it short or up. They did allow earrings, so we all had our ears pierced, or we pierced each other's with a surgical needle. I remember that. The only earrings you could wear were plain gold sleepers, similar to what I have on now, only they're a bit smaller than that. You see guys wear that, plain gold ones. That's the only earrings we were allowed to wear. A plain wedding band. No diamond, no diamond ring, and a plain watch. That was basically for infection control, no ring with anything, just plain. Which is the reason I had a plain band when I got married. I got a plain band and a diamond so I could wear a nice plain band at work. The uniforms, you had to have white nylons.

Another piece of paper falls from the sky. Wait a minute, let's see what it says. We won. We won. The government gave in. So soon? All our demands were met. I don't believe it. That's great. See what we can do? A pile of paper falls from the sky. That almost hit me. It didn't come from the director's office. It's from the government. Bill 11, what's that mean? ?? I've been working for a for profit facility for years. What are we going to do? Cowboy arrives. Woops, almost tripped over that ... There's some mighty pretty new buildings here. Could sure use some dedicated folks to take care of old geezers. You're probably busy with all your reading. But you think about it. I'm busier than a one armed guitar player right now. But you can contact me any time. Here's my card. Phone, cell, fax, email, website, oh and another cell phone. And don't take no wooden nickels now, ya hear? He leaves. This isn't getting any less confusing. Cowboy re-enters. Sorry, forgot to give my condolences. What for? I heard one of your clients passed on just half hour ago, Mrs. ? or something. But adios now. ??? . . . We did our best, didn't we? Yes, we did. But it's not enough.

That was when I was in training. When I graduated it was still like a white uniform, white nylons, white shoes. And the appearance with no hair on the collar and that stuff. Some people wore diamond rings, it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't until '82 around the bargaining, or '80, that we changed that people could have coloured uniforms. They wanted to have what they called warming jackets. You'd see people with a jacket over their uniform. And they wanted to have pantsuits. Because around the '70s, women were wearing more pantsuits, and a lot of them wanted to wear them at work. And they didn't want to wear their cap. One of the arguments they gave on the cap is that when you graduated from a university you didn't have a cap. So it looked strange. You'd have people walking around with caps, some without caps. Also the cap, you're not changing that daily. It's the same cap and you change it every few months. You're trying to bend over and it was unsanitary. We had quite a debate in bargaining, if you can imagine this now, to have pantsuits, coloured uniforms, and not to have to wear the caps. I believe it was either '80 or '82 we did that.

My hospital came out with the policy while we were bargaining. We still went on strike anyway. But it reflected what we were bargaining for. Some hospitals were smart enough to do those things. But we still went on strike anyway. I wanted to tell you about that policy. When we were bargaining, the AHA spokesman, we came in with our proposals that nurses could wear what they want, as long as it was clean and sensible. That would include coloured, no caps, but these things would be optional. They came back with a proposal. There was 2 nurses on his bargaining committee as well. They came back with a proposal saying that if it was a pantsuit, they would agree to that. The colours, as long as they were pale pastels. And the caps were option. What's the problem with the colours, why do you want it pale pastel. Pale pastel conotates a baby, these women are children, they're called girls. What's with the pale pastel? He responded by saying, I think we need

to have some controls. We want polka dot panties and stuff like that. So that was it, we walked out. We said, that is it. When you can talk about this policy sensibly, give us a ring, we'll be in the other room. So they did shortly. He said, I have to apologize. The nurses on my committee have asked me to apologize, and I was completely out of line making that remark, and I do apologize for that. So the policy, I think that's basically what it is, is that caps and pantsuits are optional, warming jackets and pastel. What has happened though, people have gone from these pastel uniforms to dark colours or whatever. They basically wear what they want. The little jackets have gone from being plain coloured. Some have teddy bears on them for the paediatric units. One person has little pigs all over there. She said, I just thought I would like to have pictures of all the men I've known. So people wear what they want. A lot of it is kind of a humour thing. Patients say they wish they could tell who's who here. Mostly people wear what we call scrubs, if you know what I mean. Like the OR does. A lot of uniforms now are scrubs. They may be blue or whatever. A lot of the hospitals provide scrub uniforms for different areas, like ICU. Our floor used to have scrub uniforms too where I used to work, which is day surgical. But also the porters wear those uniforms the doctors wear. The patients say they don't know who's who. Nobody wears caps anymore.

Once again, nothing to do with me. My husband was a hard rock miner. After we got married, or before we got married, he decided he didn't want to do that anymore. He was a hard rock miner for several years in Ontario and Northern Manitoba. He decided he didn't want to do that. All his family is still in mining in Thompson and Snow Lake. He decided he wanted to go back to school, upgrade his knowledge, and be a policeman. So he did that. He had an interview out here in Edmonton. So we moved to interview. We moved from Winnipeg to Edmonton in 1969. Then when he had his final interview, they told him they didn't think he would be acceptable in the police department, given his nature. If you want to know what my husband is like, he's the opposite of me. He's a big, tall, pleasant, quiet person. Too pleasant, they figured. That wasn't the type of personality, that's what they told him was the reason. So he worked at different jobs out at the jail and Overhead Door. Then he applied to get on the fire department. So then we couldn't move. I would've loved to get out of Alberta. I didn't care for Alberta at all. I just didn't. I didn't like the politics. I didn't like the fact that you couldn't talk politics with anybody. They didn't even know who was in, whether it Deifenbacker. When I was in St. Boniface, that's what we did at coffee time. They changed the governments there. We'd just elected an NDP government. They would have Liberal, they would have Tory, depending on what they do. If they didn't like them, they'd vote them out. The city government, provincial government, it was always interesting talk. The big thing was going shopping. If there was a new shopping centre that opened, and redecorating the homes and all that stuff. So that part of it I didn't like. It wasn't a pretty place to be. Grey stucco buildings, and the weather wasn't as good as Winnipeg. They didn't have nice streets. I would've moved back to Winnipeg, but by that time my husband was in the fire department and we couldn't move because he'd lose his seniority. So we never did. We ended up staying here, because my husband's job was here.

That was the first time. That we got this collective bargaining as an arm of the professional association. So when I came here, the collective bargaining was the arm of the professional association here, which was called the AARN, Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. They would bargain on our behalf with the government and tell us whatever it was.

They had it separated so it wouldn't be seen as management dominated. Because also it's a licensing body, so there's a bit of conflict between the roles of it. They had a separate arm for collective bargaining. They had a local or whatever, and each hospital was set up. So I'd go to the meetings to find out what it was. They would tell us what they had settled for and what we had to vote on it. That would be like the vote was tomorrow or something. I and another person would say, should we have time to think this over and talk to each other? You just gave us the information. Well that's when we have to have the vote in, is tomorrow. That always bugged me. So we'd call them up and tell them off about that. That's the way it's done, so that happened a couple of times. I talked to my husband and he would say, no. He'd come home with his contract at work. Then they were going to have this vote on the contract. That's a sensible way of doing things. I'd like to be able to study this to see if this is good or bad. So that irritated me about the collective bargaining. There came a time when they decided that they would, there was a bit of a dispute in the professional organization. The people who were running the collective bargaining, Bob Donahue. I forget her name, she was executive director of the AARN, but designated him in. He wasn't a nurse. All their people had to be nurses. He was under them somehow and was sort of in charge of the collective bargaining program. This would be in '77. There came a time they decided they should form a separate body altogether. They had a dispute between the 2 of them, is what it was. Then there was a decision out of Saskatchewan saying these were basically management dominated unions, even if they were a separate arm of the professional association. They ruled against Saskatchewan association. Some of the same people that were on the AARN part were also on the collective bargaining part. So they said it wasn't acceptable. They had said that would be the problem here, but that wasn't the real problem. The real problem was I think there was a bit of a dispute between the 2 of them. Bob wanted to bring it more into a trade union. People in the profession wanted to make sure everybody was still very professional.

I think it was also the fact that the AARN was not only an association promoting the education and well-being of the members, but it was also the licensing body. The doctors had a separate licensing body and they had the AMA, which is basically their bargaining arm and their promotion of interests. The AARN was and still is all just one. It's an association plus a licensing body. But the association no longer does bargaining for its members. I think they tried to resolve this by actually making it a separate arm. It wasn't a decision against them, it was a decision out of Saskatchewan. I can find out about that. Some of the same people that were on the board or high executive level involved there

were also involved in the bargaining arm. So it was not an appropriate bargaining unit as deemed by the Saskatchewan Labour Board. So they had said to us, this may be the same thing here. Therefore, we think we should have just a whole separate union, have our own. They didn't put the word union into the name. That's why it was called United Nurses of Alberta. So there was a meeting to decide about that. We all geared up and went down for it. There was what we call all the regular bedside nurses, we saw the AARN at that time. I think they're not that much that way now, but we saw the AARN as being mostly managers and academics who had no interest in the needs of the actual working class people, which we were. We call it the bedside nurses. I forget how many they'd planned for at that meeting. It was just overflowing. There were people out in the hall. I was there with my manager. Well I wasn't there with her, but they funded us to go down at our little local meeting. They wanted a couple of people to go and I said I'll go. The president went and the head honcho from our hospital went. They were all on one side and we were on the other side. So we were all geared to argue this thing. There was something, and somebody moved that they adjourn the meeting, and they did. So we ended up being mad at everybody. I think it was the collective bargaining arm. They were setting out the rules for this meeting, who could vote and who couldn't. The AARN was saying, you can vote not to give directions but so we can take it into consideration. They were debating what these motions would mean if they were adopted. Then Gurtey Chinell, who was the president at that time of the organization that later became the United Nurses of Alberta, got up and said, this meeting is not being run according to whatever. I therefore move the meeting be adjourned. People said, well you just can't move the meeting be adjourned. Someone moved, actually incorrectly, now that I'm a parliamentarian, said, oh no, once the motion to adjourn is moved, you have to adopt it. So the meeting was only half an hour and was adjourned. We were mad at everybody at that point, because we'd geared up and gone down there in buses and everything, and we were ready to say, look, this is the association we want to have. You guys have been taking our money and not doing anything for us for years. Meeting adjourned, we all went to drink including the managers. We met up with them afterwards and argued with them.

The government can make all the laws they want, but you can't stop people from going on strike.

We were talking about governments making laws to either control strikes or to stop strikes. You can't stop people from striking. You can make laws saying people can't strike, and if they do this will be the penalty. You may indeed make them pay the penalty, they may refuse to pay the penalty. But you can't prevent them from going on strike. Our nurses would discuss that. How are they going to make me do this? Ok, you can fine me, but you still can't make me go to work. You could get the army out and march them to work, but can you make them work? No. You can threaten people. Maybe you can threaten to kill somebody if they didn't work. But if they accepted the threat and said, fine shoot me, you still can't make them work.

The 1982 strike was basically we were bargaining generally for improved wages and working conditions. A good percentage increase in our wages. And we never talked percentages. We basically bargained for about \$2.50 an hour every round of bargaining. When we were only making \$10 an hour, that was a pretty big percentage. When we got up to \$12, it became less. Generally every bargaining we went into, that's what we basically went in with, for the hourly rate. If anybody was around at that time you'd notice that we never talked percentages. The press would always say, what percentage is that? We'd say, we're asking for \$2.50 an hour. This is what we make now. We want to get the wages to \$13 an hour. But the big issue for 1982 was working conditions. Basically scheduling.

So the big issue, we called it working conditions scheduling. Prior to the 1982 contract, we would have 2 weeks notice of our schedule. We had one weekend off a month. They could work us 8 days in a row. You could short change from evenings to days. What I mean by evenings, what we consider nights would be 12 midnight on. Evenings is after 3:30 in the afternoon. They could do short changes. You could have split days off. You could have a Wednesday or something instead of 2 days off. So there were all those things. Our main thing is we wanted advance notice. We wanted a year's notice. We compared ourselves to other workers. The employers never did like us comparing ourselves to other workers. They always wanted to talk to us about being nurses, about being there for the patient. We'd say, okay but we're also workers. Here's a group of workers who are shift workers, they work with the public. Firefighters, they know what they're working a year ahead. The city is able to do that, you should be able to do that. So that was a big issue, and they didn't want to agree to that. We wanted Easter Sunday off, there were these things. Basically bargaining things. During that time, that's when one of the Department of Labour's rules and regulations, when bargaining broke off you had to go to mediation. For the crown hospitals they had a similar procedure called conciliation, which was a volunteer person looking at both sides and trying to get both parties to talk and come up with a settlement. If you didn't agree to that, there was a time period and you could take a strike vote, which is what we had done in the 1980 strike. At that time we were legally allowed to strike. However, the government introduced this new things, which is called the disputes inquiry board, another step for us to take in addition to the mediation. They said their idea was to provide cooling off between the parties. We saw this just as another delay to taking a strike vote. Not that nurses wanted to go on strike, but really that was the only way you could put pressure on the employers, as most unions realize. Employees lose quite a bit in a strike. They lose wages and people usually dump all over them, unless they're trade unionists who support you. But it's a bargain. You're making a bargain with your employer, a contract that you'll do the work of the employer if they do certain things for you. Like the wages and working conditions you want to work at. If they don't agree, then you're going to withdraw your part of the bargain, which is to do the work, which is called a strike. When we completed the meeting with the Disputes Inquiry Board, we naturally sent reports out to the unions, our locals. The employer thought perhaps we wouldn't tell the locals what a wonderful report this was.

The employers wanted to accept it. So they also took it upon themselves to send 2 copies to each union. Each local had 4 copies of this Disputes Inquiry report. We set up a date for when they were to be voted on. I think the government set up a date for it to be voted on as well. I'm rambling here now.

So anyway, I would say the members weren't really, in 1980 the members were ready to go on strike. 1977 was our first strike. We didn't want to be out there. Didn't like getting ordered back to work. The government MLAs had been given raises and we had to fight for this, even though there was a shortage of employees. By the time the 1980 bargaining came along, the nurses were already talking in the hospitals, if we go on strike this time we're not going back to work. They were waiting to go on strike. This was not the case in 1982. It was a different economic situation in Alberta, and some people were unemployed. There was a bit of a downturn in the economy. Nurses, like a lot of people, realized this doesn't look very good for them if they're trying to get more and a lot of people are out of jobs. So there wasn't a big push from the nurses at that point. One of the significant factors that caused the strike, in addition to the fact that we weren't getting what the members thought was important in our contract, was some of the remarks that the Disputes Inquiry Board had made when making up the report. A particular one, I remember members coming up to the mike holding these copies in their hand saying, he says that we don't do anything at night. That the patients are all asleep, the doctors don't make any rounds, so why is it important to have 2 people on at night. That was one of our proposals, that there be 2 nurses on. That no nurse be assigned to work alone on a ward or unit. The fact that they knew so little about nursing and what we did, this lack of respect. We probably wouldn't have had a strike except for that. It really made them mad. It's not a good idea at the best of times to tick off nurses.

They voted it down, ya. Then we had the strike vote as well. The strike vote wasn't as high as the 1980 vote, I think it was around 70%. The 1980 one was 98% or something. Because we were still under the government regulations or following the government regulations at that time, we requested that the government supervise a strike vote. The government refused to do it, because they said, you've had your kick at the cat. Nurses are very good about, if we're going to do something, we'll all do it together. So once the locals saw that this other local had voted, the city locals and all these people, it was generally across the province. It wasn't split between small and large locals, but some locals had voted not to go on strike. None of the large locals. So they wanted to re-vote, but they weren't allowed to re-vote. By the time we came to the 1988 strike, we had decided not to participate in anything to do with the Department of Labour, including their rules and regulations regarding strike votes, ability to strike. So in the 1988 strike, all our people were allowed to vote. We held the vote. Our crown hospitals, which had never been allowed to legally go on strike anyway, at that time in '88 they were voting too. So we changed that. They wanted to know that. If our local votes not to go on strike, can we re-vote? We said yes. This was something the members wanted to do. So that's what happened in 1982. So then there was a strike. Ya, 72 hours and we went on strike.

It was a mean strike from the fact that the public were really against us going on strike. Some of the people didn't have jobs, were laid off, and they figured anybody was lucky to be working, including the nurses. The employers had this big thing about they would have a vote how patient care was suffering and how they would have to fly out these babies from the neonatal intensive care to Saskatchewan, because the nurses had gone on strike. They had asked us to keep some people in for essential services, which is what we don't do. Maybe I should tell you about that. When we go on strike, and that was when we were legally allowed to go on strike, there was no provision, as they had in some provinces or public sector unions, that you can go on strike but you still have to maintain so many people in the institution to maintain basic services. That was never in the legislation of Alberta. They never dreamed the nurses would go on strike. So what we said was, if there's a critical emergency that arises from unforeseeable circumstances, which is fairly strong language. It would mean that the employer would have to show that they didn't have enough supervisory staff to handle an emergency. An emergency would be like maybe a plane crash in the city. It might be a big traffic accident in a small hospital. But the locals themselves at that level would decide. We would only go in in unforeseeable circumstances, or critical emergency. So there was a big debate. The employers wanted us to leave people at least in neonatal intensive care units, because there was highly specialized nurses there. We didn't. We got a lot of public flack for that. They used to that to say, they had to fly the patients out to Saskatoon. They would show pictures. In fact I went from Edmonton to Calgary and they had the same picture in the Calgary newspaper of a different employer down there with a baby cradled in their arms, flying them out to Saskatoon because the bad nurses were on strike. So people would get up and the microphone and say, I'm from local such and such, I'm one of the baby killers I guess. They called us baby killers. You'd be picketing, they'd take runs at you with a car on the picket line. You'd have to jump out of the way. 1982 they'd tell you, you can get more up on 6th street, hookers yelling.

I can't remember how long the strike was, not quite 3 weeks. We wanted to avoid the situation we had in 1980 of them declaring that there was a health emergency. They had legislation that if they could determine that there was a health emergency, that they had the right to order you back to work. So we wanted to avoid that situation this time. We sent letters to the Department of Labour saying that, should a situation arise where you deem that it is a state of emergency, please advise us so we can respond first. Because we didn't want to get this back to work order. We will arrange to cover this for you. If there is a situation, ... please let us know. He assured us that he would. As I said in a speech to the legislature following some legislation they brought in in '83, we're still waiting for that call. They never did call us. They just declared that there was an emergency, and they ordered us back to work with the usual fines. And an additional penalty on it that failure to go back to work would result in the additional penalty of decertification of all of our locals. Also in removing the right of any officer to run again for any position in any union

for a certain period of time. We've had quite a few pieces of legislation. I always say it's a bullet with United Nurses name on it.

Ya we did go back to work. Then we had a tribunal hearing, that's what they had ordered. A fairly not too out of line of what our proposals were in the end.

We made substantial gains in our working conditions and hours of work. In fact, we had very little proposals on hours of work after that. Obviously they had the money to do it, they could've done it at the table. But they had to put us through our paces. It wasn't that much different than what we were bargaining for.

The strikes we've been talking about right now are hospital strikes, hospital nurses. All of them. That would be all the hospital locals right across the province. It's what you call group bargaining. To be fair, it's a fairly easy group to bargain for, compared to a group like AUPE. They're all the same category. We were all staff nurses. There's a few instructors and head nurses in the contract. So it's a fairly easy group to bargain, compared to other people that have to bargain. I always thought that, anyway. We have the same interests. We do the same type of work, whether we're doing it in a big hospital or a small hospital. And the employers bargain that way as well. They had a group they called the Alberta Hospital Association. So all their hospitals would nominate people to bargain on their behalf for them province-wide. So when the contract is finished, it's province-wide. We could've done rotating of strikes. Some group of bargainers will do that. They'll do rotating strikes. Those things have been suggested each time. People have talked about working to rule. Nurses have always objected to working to rule. How are you going to work to rule? When you're working you can just say, I'm not going to answer that bell. I myself am a nurse. Even as union president, I also still worked in the hospital. Not that much, but I still kept my position and worked a minimum of once a month at least. So when I'm a nurse I'm a nurse. We never wanted to have our patients involved in our bargaining. The patients were always very supportive when we went on strike. They would tell us all the tales that went on when the strike was over with. Some of them would come and picket with us. We never wanted to take our strike to the patients. So when we're working, we're working as a nurse. We always thought this was a cleaner way of doing things. It would be very hard for nurses to do a work to rule. If we're going to go on strike, we'd give them proper notice so they can train people to come in. Then when we're out, we're out. Nobody stays in. That's another problem some of the other hospitals and essential services public sector people have. You leave people in to work. The reason you're on strike in the first place, you've got problems with your working conditions usually. So it's bad enough to be working when you're regularly staffed, let alone when you're working in there with some scabs and supervisors and not enough people. We found it was cleaner to withdraw everybody and go on strike.

We had scabs. In '82 we had a lot of scabs. Our own members. It's a 2 to 4 year course to be a registered nurse. There weren't enough nurses in the first place, let alone when you're on strike. There isn't anybody to hire. That's the other thing I consider we had a good deal

for strikes. First of all, there's a short supply and demand principle. Although we've got this big right wing business government here, they don't respect the market principle of supply and demand when you're talking about nurses. That's not to say they didn't try and get us to come in. I always used to say to them, well that's sort of like getting a divorce. Then they just want you to come back and do the dishes. We're not going to do it, okay? We're on strike. We don't do those things. The same as when you're on vacation. Getting back to the problem with the babies during the strike. We said, if there's a strike coming up, you'd better start training some people. We're not leaving anybody. They were pressuring the people before they went on strike. So we gave them time to do that, and they didn't do it. We advised the employers of that. They could've done creative things like in the city they could've said, we'll take all the supervisors from intensive care units and have them work in one intensive care unit in the city. I'll tell you some of the things I thought were easy and some of the tough things of that strike. But the other thing, we have a surplus of hospitals in Alberta. We always have. It's changed slightly. To give you an indication of that, is you have all these people on strike and they can still operate. We had a surplus of hospitals, so a lot of people who were in the hospital weren't necessarily needing to be there. A lot of them were long term care. We have a surplus of what we call acute care hospitals, where people would be having heart attacks or serious medical conditions or surgery. That's what gets the news during the strike, not being able to operate, surgery lists backed up, etc. Then usually after about 2 weeks, the surgeons have had 2 weeks vacation and aren't making money, after 2 weeks they usually send a letter to the government saying, we believe there's a crisis here. You never get letters from internists, the guys specializing in internal medicine. Because this is a chance they have to actually catch up on their work. But the surgeons, after about 2 weeks they get restless.

We had conflicts with everybody. The professional association is the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses. At that time, although they had a name guarantee registered nurse, there wasn't actually a legislation that you actually had to be licensed to practise nursing in 1982. They brought that legislation in right after that. But in the contract, and before United Nurses of Alberta started bargaining, as I was telling you earlier, it used to be the Alberta Association of Nurses, the registered body that did the bargaining. In the contract there was different wages for different levels. So a registered nurse was so much, graduate nurse, which would be somebody who hadn't got their registration or maybe never did qualify, was so much. So there was the two levels. At that time, the nurses used to talk to us about the registration body. They weren't satisfied that they were paying all this money into the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, and they didn't think they were getting good services from them. One of the things that bothered them was that they didn't get to vote on dues increases. That's still the case. The council decides that under their bylaws. They were mad at the association. We used to have this liaison committee between the association and the union, and we would meet on common interest things. But it kind of turned into the members saying, you tell the association this. From now on do this or that. We would say, that's not our job. If you've got a concern, you bring it to the association. We don't need scraps with the association. Remember we separated from

the association, which we still didn't have a good relationship with them, other than meeting on this liaison committee. So then, to address this concern of the members, we had a proposal. I don't know whether it came from the committee or from them. They didn't like the fact that the AARN was increase their dues and not letting them have any input. In our contract we would have no separate fees, whether they were a registered or non-registered nurse. There was a bit of debate about that so they wouldn't have to pay a registration fee. It wasn't compulsory at that time to be registered to practice. So it would be one fee. If you were a member of United Nurses of Alberta, you got one wage. We took out the difference. If you were a staff nurse, this is the rate of pay you got, as long as you were a member of the United Nurses of Alberta. People got that confused that we were against people being registered. They could still be registered, but we weren't going to require a different wage rate in our contract. There was quite a bit of debate about that, with the members as well. But the majority of the members wanted that in there and said, look, you can still be registered. It doesn't mean we're going to be working alongside unregistered nurses or anything. You can be registered nurses, it's just that it's not up to us to put a different wage level for registered nurses in the contract. Then we started to get heat from the registration body. While we were in bargaining, they took ads out in the paper saying something to the effect that they were concerned about United Nurses proposals, which would downgrade the profession of nursing because they weren't supporting registered nurses. So we filed a statement of claim saying we were going to sue them, basically just to get them to shut up while we were in bargaining. We didn't need that. They were quiet after that. It wasn't something we needed in bargaining. It said the majority of members had wanted it. So then you got the members wondering, what are we doing here? Does it mean we're not going to have registered nurses working in the hospital? There was this going on. When you're bargaining, you don't just have bargaining. You still got your business to run, and you've still got these other things that come up while you're bargaining. You're trying to keep moving the ball forward. You have these things happening. I think I was telling you, there was different conflicts. That was one of the conflicts with the professional association. Prior to the strike, our unionized labour relations staff went on strike just before the 1982 strike. They came back to work a few weeks before our strike started. They went on strike January 1st. So while we were doing proposals and bargaining with our own people, the same crew, or at least me, the executive officers, cuz I was also on the negotiating committee, executive officer and executive director, were the negotiating committee for the staff as well. Then the staff served strike notice on January 1st and went out on January 1st.

Most people don't realize we have staff. Our members didn't realize we had staff. As soon as these guys went on strike, then our members are calling up and saying, who are these people and why are we paying them so much money? They didn't know we had staff. The smaller unions didn't have to. But we were 10,000 members at that time, with over 200 locals strung across. We started out with a few staff, but by this time we had 8 or 10 labour relations staff. They would do grievances. They weren't involved in the hospital negotiations, although we used to have one labour relations staff that was on the committee to assist the executive director. But they were never involved in the

negotiations or strike stuff. They would do some other negotiations, like nursing homes, Red Cross, grievances, arbitrations, enforcing the contract, teaching our people. Then we have other staff, like secretarial staff. That's another story. They didn't go on strike then, in 1988, the middle of that strike, they just formed a union, which I was happy for. I think you're always better off dealing with unionized staff, cuz then you don't have to try and figure out what they want. Anyway, this strike in January, which was when we were getting ready to vote or going to DIB or something, we had our employees on strike. The press was having a good time, because the press is quite anti-union. They pretend they're taking the side of the employees of that union, but they're not really. It's just a chance to jump on unions in general. There we have the front page of Margaret Ethier crossing the picket line. That was going on just prior to our strike. It wasn't a bad time for them to go on strike. They were concerned with negotiations, so they wouldn't be involved. That's the ? meeting. We found out they put these big ads in the paper. You have all these things going on at the same time you're doing bargaining. They came back to work, but they came back to work with no increase other than what we'd offered them before they went on strike. So they were not happy campers. The executive director wasn't happy. So we had that kind of atmosphere, but basically we were busy with our strike.

It might've even been before they put in Bill 44. Another thing happened in that '82 strike. Just to show that you have these things happen but you still carry on, was that I had to go in and have my appendix out in the middle of the strike. That made quite the story. We had all these things going on in the midst of the strike. Yet the members were very solid and very supportive.

The U of A was not United Nurses at that time. So that hospital was open. I guess there was a lot of flack about, well it's a good thing those people didn't go on strike. My husband wouldn't bring me the paper or radio. Those kind of things bothered him. I didn't really hear all the details. It was on national radio, because my brother in Nova Scotia, and he was anti-union. He figured some union goon beat me up on the picket line, because it said I was taken from the picket line to the hospital. Some people said it was a mental breakdown. My members sent me humorous cards. Then I got out. Then there was all the flack that came from that. There was all these things happening in the news. In the meantime we're trying to bargain and trying to get ahead.

I think we brought in a policy of not speaking to them. There'd be no contact or relations with the Department of Labour. It was basically given the actions of the Department of Labour against working against the best interests of United Nurses. I can't remember what the policy was, but that we would have no truck or trade with the Department of Labour. Only UNA members will decide when this union will strike and when it will not. I think we sent them a notice to that effect as well. We told everybody about it as well. In 1983, it would be about that time. We decided that we weren't going to participate in any of this stuff. Because they were not working in our best interests. Like a lot of unions did at the time, and probably do now, Department of Management. They certainly weren't there for the best interests of the members. We were following the rules, we were

bargaining in good faith. Then we would start winning or have a chance of winning, because remember I told you the supply and demand situation. So we had a really good chance of going on strike. They had nobody to replace us. We didn't have outside scabs coming in to replace us, and certainly no nurses from other provinces would come to replace us. We were in a very good bargaining position, playing by their rules. Then they would simply change the rules when it looked like we were winning.

In 1983 they gave us another piece of legislation. These other strikes we had were all legal in the beginning. When they thought we were winning or putting pressure on, then they would order us back to work. It didn't matter whether we had all of the hospitals out or 7 hospitals out, which was in the '77 strike. Or if it was 4 days or 17 days, they were all declared emergency at some point and ordered us back to work. In a way they were being a little more up front in '83. In '83 they decided, enough already. They decided to make it illegal for us to even go on strike, and I believe also to even have a strike vote at that time. That was called Bill 44. They invited us to give presentations at the legislature. We weren't going to go to the hearings, because we didn't want anything to do with them. The executive director at that time, Simon ?, saying there's no way. They would have to drag me bloody bodied, screaming, to go down to that legislature. But we went down because the members thought it would be important for us to make a speech. So we did give one, and got good publicity on it. We had a good time with it. Simon gave a speech and I gave a speech. If you've ever seen nurses on strike, we also like to have fun. That's how we work. Some of the people came up from south central. They dressed up. There was a gorilla, that was King Peter. Then there was the wolf in sheep's clothing. They dressed up and came in and sat down. We'd have a good time. Of course they were on the news as well. I made a speech. Not too long a one, but basically reviewing how the government is saying that we're bringing this in because of a concern for health care. I went over the fact that they'd shown very little concern for health care, that it was just a way to try and get the nurses. That in all of our dealings with them, there was always a shortage of nurses. We were in a good bargaining position, and yet they would change the rules. And said something to the affect that, I can't remember. It was just pure and simple revenge, this legislation. It had nothing to do with concern for health care. Lougheed was the premier at the time. Lougheed and his boys don't take kindly to being outsmarted by a bunch of women. But let's not pretend it had anything to do with concern for health care. That got quoted quite widely. That was basically our way of dealing with the government throughout the years, was not so much to be this fearsome government and victim, but to make fun of them and laugh at them. Because they were laughable buffoons, the stuff they would come up with. Then if it didn't work, they'd use the heavy hand of the law. Then they couldn't understand why you wouldn't obey it. They'd say, well you just have to. Same way as in '82 they ordered the vote. They said, you have to go on the vote, because it's illegal if you don't go to vote. We're nurses, we're just not doing it. They were the guys that were completely frustrated. They kept dreaming up heavier and heavier legislation, and we still wouldn't go along with it.

That was a very defining moment for me, that '86 strike. We talk about strikes and history of strikes, and the violence on the picket lines. Strikes were always ?, because of the time element, except for the people have a couple hours picketing then go to the beer parlour after. You can have fun on strikes too. But we talk about it as a historical fact of people being hit over the head by goons that the company would hire, or police. We hadn't seen very much of that lately, until the 1986 Gainers strike. That changed my perspective on a lot of things. I looked at our bargaining and our nurses. After everybody's ready to go on strike and after about a week you think, gee when's this strike going to be over? We never had a strike any longer than 3 weeks, and we never had anybody hit us on the head or have riot police out.

...

So being nurses, we all went to the bar. We already got rooms for the night there. So we all hashed it out. I can remember going up to the administrator, figuring out where her room is, knocking on her door. She was saying, but then it's going to be a union. We were saying, we should have the right to decide what we want. It showed there was all these administrators that didn't want us leaving the AARN. They thought it would be professional to stay as a collective bargaining unit with the AARN. So we debated it all out after hours in the room. It got everybody grouped together. Who do they think they are? They didn't feel they were being represented by the AARN, still don't. Although the AARN is significantly changed, the people that they have in there, their attitude. But Yvonne Chapman, that's who it was, the executive director. Anyway, an example of how they felt they weren't being treated by the AARN properly and the UNA. Our dues are much higher than theirs are. When I was in, it was 1.1%, and the AARN's were like \$143 or something a year. They're \$250 now. That's all they complained about, was the AARN dues and the fact they weren't democratic. They decided the dues; you couldn't vote for them at the meeting, and all that stuff. Never had one complaint about our dues, ever. Yet that's all they do is complain about dues. They figure, you don't need this stuff. But that's why they're there; we can call them. In fact I got a call one time as president, because they could always call through to me. She was saying, raising our dues, we don't make that much money. It was right after the strike and you raised the dues. I said, we haven't raised any dues. Which local are you at? It was 179, my own local, the Edmonton General, Grey Nuns. I called, and what they did, they had the opportunity to have a dues levy at the local. That's what they had done, and they had done it properly. You put a notice up that you're going to raise the levy. Either you get a lot of people out at the meeting, which is good, or nobody comes and you get your levy. That's what they did, and they did it right after the '88 strike. They wanted to have an extra thing for the next strike, to have a little strike fund. But they've never complained about the dues. Because they feel they're doing something for them.

I wasn't involved in that formation. Anyway, I believe that's where the decision was made whether we would stay as a collective bargaining arm or whether it would be a separate union. This group, I was not involved in it. Some of them are management now. But

anyway, they got a draft constitution and a temporary thing. Then a meeting was held, might've been the following May. [1977] I can get you these dates. Anyway, at our little local meeting, it was called ... , they needed somebody to go down to this meeting. I said I would like to go. No, that's not true. We actually had a strike, I'm sorry. We had a strike before our first official meeting. I'm not sure of the timing.

Oh yes, that's why I decided to join the union. They formed this thing, bargaining broke off, and they told us they needed a big strike vote. That's the thing: don't tell your members lies. So we wouldn't be going on strike, but they needed a really strong strike vote. Because that would put pressure on them, this was the wage and price controls. That was one of the excuses they needed. We were really ticked off at work. Whenever you want to talk about the shortage of nurses, that was about the time they phased out these students. So we were working very short of nurses. Our wages were poor. You could hardly get your work done. I know everybody says nurses go on strike because they're concerned about the patients, but that's not really true. That's a secondary concern. If you don't have enough nurses, it's not good for the patients either. We could see that. When you're working as a nurse, that's a very difficult thing to see. You don't have enough bodies to go around. But mainly you're going for broke. You're doing everything you should be doing, and you still can't get your work done. Maybe people just about died, or you're missing stuff. So it's very frustrating to go home from work. So we're bargaining, and we figured with the more money, if we got more money there'd be more nurses so at least you could work better. I would say the first strike was more a concern of you're going on strike so you can get more money so you can give better patient care. Because we didn't have enough nurses to work with, and you can't attract unless you've got proper salary. Then here these wage and price controls come along. But anyway, the union exec told us if we got a really strong strike vote, it would put pressure on the government. There's no way they're going to let nurses go on strike, because they don't go on strike. They're short of nurses as it is. It would be very bad for the government. There's something about those governments that they'd just given themselves a raise, the MLAs or something. Cuz we had little picket signs, raises for you but not for us. So we gave them a good strike vote. And guess what, we went on strike. This had been a very dry spring. The first day of our strike rained. We'd made all these picket signs. First day of our strike, rain, our picket signs were wet. They told us not to talk to the press, they would do all the press stuff. See how we changed that. The union, they were "they". So once again, we're mad at the government, the employer, and the union. First of all, the union told us we weren't going to strike, they just needed a good strike vote. So that's what we did. Where are we? On the picket line like common union people. A lot of people were really ticked off that anyone has to picket. Just an aside, when Simon came along later in the '80s, and we were talking about strike. He was saying for people that don't feel comfortable picketing, they can do otherwise. People said, well why wouldn't they want to picket? We're so busy at work we don't get a chance to talk to each other. Picketing, you can visit. I saw people there I hadn't see for 10 years. He said, well that's not what it's about, for visiting. If you ever notice on a nurses picket line, we have a good time too. But anyway, our first picketing experience, we were ticked off, then it rained.

So the next day back again, all new ones with plastic over them. In the press I can remember seeing these pictures of us in the pouring rain, we have no comment. I can remember seeing myself, no comments. Sounded like we were stupid. Then we'd only been on strike for about 4 days and they ordered us back to work. The union chose to go back. So we were mad at everybody. We just spontaneously, there wasn't any direction from the union at the General anyway. I think we heard the Alec was coming. Or we called them and said, we walked out of the legislature. We were just so mad. First of all, we didn't think we were going on strike. But having decided that we were on strike, you know a nurse is going to make a proper job of it. We get ordered back to work, we weren't planning on going back to work. Fred Caselcov ... then they said we could be interviewed, after about the 3rd day. Somebody said, well you talk to them. I wasn't on the executive there at all. I was just on the board. They said, you talk to them. So I'd given them this big long interview about all that. Then Fred got this call. He said, they just ordered you back to work, the strike's off. I remember him saying, all that tape's gone. Because of course it wasn't a story anymore, the story was back to work. I didn't know about stuff like that. That might've been my first interview. We were just so mad. We just marched down to the legislature and they said, the Alec is coming too. So we met them, you know where the General is. We walked up over 9th St. and we could see these hordes coming down from the Alec. They joined us. We didn't know what we were going to do there. They said, what are you doing there? They interviewed us. So why have you come? Something about, are you disobeying the law? . . . So that was the first strike. We were upset about the way it had been run. You've got to remember, nurses are very organized people. They plan for everything. You do this, you do that, this is what you do. After that, we still had to have our first annual meeting. So we did get off with a kick. I did say that in a speech one time. We started off with a bang. We hadn't even had our first annual meeting when we had our strike. . . .

Oh ya. How they ever got a strike running, when they hadn't even had a meeting, but anyway it went through. Then we had our annual meeting. I decided I would run. The reason I ran is that I didn't like the way it was run. The lack of information beforehand, telling us one thing. If there was a possibility of a strike, they should've told us so we could've prepared for it. Don't lie to us. Then this whole thing of don't talk to the press, so we looked like a bunch of ninnies. Then telling us to talk to the press. They didn't ask us whether we wanted to go back to work, they just said what can we do now. We found out later that's what they expected to happen. They didn't have the money for a strike. They were damn glad. I talked to them afterwards. They were just going by the seat of their pants, because they money hadn't been transferred over. They had no money. This is what they assumed would happen if there was a strike. They were hoping for no strike, but if it did, they figured it would be a short lived back to work order. They were damn glad to get it. They had no money to sustain the strike. We didn't know things about strike pay or anything. The end result of that was we did have a victory in that the wage and price control, whatever we got out of it, they said they couldn't go beyond the wage and price control. We actually had to be legislated that we were allowed to go beyond the wage and

price controls. And we did get it, but it had to take an ordering council or contempt of court order in order to get them to do it. So we did get that.

This was just district rep. I know when I ran for president, I thought we should move more towards a trade union. I quite admire the trades and I liked what they were doing. I thought we should be more a union. I'd already invited people from CLC to my district meeting, and I liked what they were saying. Not so much to join the union, but I thought let's define ourselves. I used the word trade unionist. I said, this is what I stand for. So if you're voting for me, this is what we'll be going for.

Not till 1980. So this was in '78, was our first annual meeting. That's right, it was May 1978. So it must've been about a year after, by the time they settled everything. The first annual meeting was in '78, and I ran for it because I didn't like the way it was being run. But I don't know what I said. I probably just said that I believed that members should make the decisions and be informed, something like that. I might've said I'm running because I want to know more about the union. I probably didn't say I didn't like the way it was run. Because I was. I thought, I don't know anything about this. They needed some positions in north central district. At our local meeting they said, does anybody want to run for that? I said, I wouldn't mind doing that. Because I'd like to know more about this union stuff. That's why I ran. Just to find out more about what it's all about. Kind of a learning thing. It seemed like a low end job, it wasn't an executive position. So that's what I did, and I think that what I said to get elected: that I'd like to learn more about this. I don't know anything about it. They said sure, we'll nominate you from here. I talked to people at coffee. There was somebody running against me, I can't remember who. I talked to the Miz. I had enough sense to talk to some of these where the votes were in the district. Like the Miz and whatever. Some of them wanted to have a cup of coffee and see what I would be doing. I can remember saying I think it's really important that the members have all the information, make the decisions. That's always been my principle, and I thought that at that time. Then I got in on that.

We were already on strike before then. But the other thing about the strike I wanted to tell you. Walter Doskoch and Jack Hubler were on our picket line the first day. People said, why are these plumbers picketing with us? I said, that's what they do. I talked to them and they said, we just came out to support you. I thought that was pretty good. That's the first I saw of the other union people was Jack Hubler and Walter Doskoch. They went around together. Big guy, they said, who's that guy? They said, you talk to them. That's one thing, I never mind the talking, giving my opinion. I get shoved up to do these things. So I found out who they were and where they were from. They said, we go in there. They figured they wanted something, on our coat tails. What coat tails did we have? Be associated with plumbers. So people were pleased. They said, that's what they do. They didn't want anything. They were just picketing to support. That's what unions do, people are on strike, they come and picket with them. So I didn't know about that.

Had nothing to get me off on the wrong start, so I could do it all my way.

I don't know. I think it was mostly just to elect a body. Remember they were running with just a pro tem thing. How they ever authorized that stuff, and no money. Of course you've

got the dues. And the first contracts they got their automatic dues. They had no money. I didn't know that until after talking to them. They were lucky they even had this. I talked to Gurty and those people after. But he'll tell you that. I guess they were on a shoestring. Out of their own pocket they were doing stuff. There was bad blood, no money was transferred over to them. Or else they weren't able to access it. Because they weren't legally recognized as ? . Gurtey Chinell. I'm not sure if she's still around. The UNA was trying to get her at a meeting when they had the 25th anniversary, and they weren't able to contact her. At that time the head nurses were in our bargaining unit. They took them all out after that, because they didn't have anybody to work. She was head nurse on the pediatric unit at the . . . Red Deer Regional. I ran against her and defeated her. Bad blood there too. But she eventually went on to maybe AARN. Then they changed it. Most of the hospitals after that '77 strike changed the head nurses into what they called unit managers, with hiring and firing. They didn't want the same chaos they had there. They didn't have any kind of clinically competent people working. Everybody went out, even their managers. The only people they had were administrators who hadn't worked on the floor for years. LPNs went to work, that's all they had. So they took them out and made them union managers. But in the Red Deer Regional they left them in. So she still...she's got two loyalties. Think about the patients and your job. But she was good, and put up with a lot of crap.

When I decided to run in 1980, it was after the 1980 strike. Some people think it was before the '80 strike. After the 1980 strike, we had a settlement. When they told people to go back to work. This was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon at the office telling them to go back to work. There was a debate on whether to say to go back to work that night or the next day. I was saying, you can't expect people at 5 o'clock in the evening. People were making picket signs. When we called them they were pissed off, because they strike was over and they were just getting into it. These people are geared for strike, and they've been partying. Knowing nurses, they picket for a while and then they go to the bar. You can't tell these people to go to work that night. That's what we said. We've already got people mad that we're going back to work. She was concerned. This was the difference. She was concerned about there was different people that she knew from her area that were going to have babies, and the obstetrical unit was closed. I said, that's not our concern. How can it not be a concern? I said, our concern is the members, not the patients. We had a big fight about that. She wanted to go back to work that night. I said, no, these people have to sleep before they go back to work. Why is she concerned about the patients? Our concern should be the nurses, not the patients. That's the employer's problem. So she had that concern quite naturally, because she's the manager. And I am concerned about the patients when I'm at work. When I'm at work. In fact, I'm quite a patient's advocate at work. But that's not my concern when I'm on strike.

We were so mad about '77 by then, everybody was talking strike until we went on in '80. everybody was saying, this is what we should've done. Why did we go back to work? So people were already gear that if we had a strike again, we weren't going to go back to

work. We'll stay out until we get what we want. This kind of destroys the little thing of these militant leaders edging these people out. That was the talk. People were made about that '77 strike.

Next round of bargaining that came up was the '80 strike. It wasn't as long as the '82 strike or the '88 strike. It was about a 12 day strike, I think. We got ordered back to work and didn't go. We thought that was so fantastic until '88 came along. I was saying in '88, remember we thought we were quite the ... I don't know how many times we were ordered back to work in the '88 strike. They'd give us a contempt charge, and if you didn't do that. Then one time at the Foothills they were ordered not to strike. This was '88. But if they did strike, they weren't allowed to picket. We kept getting all these orders. People just threw them away. . . . But in '80 that was a big deal. We had a 32% increase in salary. Something like that, 28%. We didn't even count things, like shift premium, as a financial thing.

It was after that. Not that year I wasn't going to run. It entered my head that this was not the appropriate thing. Somebody called me up. A moderately conservative person. She was involved in VON, but I had worked with her at Grey Nuns and did a grievance for her, or at the General. She called me up and said, are you planning on running for president? I said, no. I got on there in May of '78, and then we had this strike less than 2 years after that. I got on in May of '78. Hadn't been on there long and they had a dispute with this executive director. We didn't even know who we were. But we said we weren't going to take this lip. We did that again as well. They should know better than to give us ultimatums. We didn't even know what an organization was. We went to see Jim Rob and asked what our options were. This guy Donahue was good. He re-opened his contract, they decided they didn't want it. I just started on this board. We didn't even know if we were allowed to have a meeting. So we had a meeting down in Red Deer at somebody's home. I went with Gurty. She said, Jim Rob's there, we should be able to call him. Well you could come with me. He always thought Donahue was a presumptuous son of a bitch. We said, he wants to open a contract and we don't want to do that. Then the other one said we could talk to the accounting firm and they would tell us. We didn't know anything about business. What you can and can't do. If we tell him we're not going to re-open his contract and he resigns, what do we do? Where do we get somebody else? We didn't know any of that. So we went to see Jim Rob first. I can remember the amused look on his face. He said, you people are the executive, and you don't want ? jacking around with you ... So we went to him for advice, and then we went to the accounting firm. He said, we can run an ad for you, that's what we do. You people are the executive, whatever decision you make. . . . We didn't know about money or funding or that we were the bosses. These guys told us we were. We made the decision that we wouldn't re-open his contract, and wrote him a letter to that effect. Gurty was really good. She went around the table, what does everybody think here? We just started. Went around the table. Because I lived in Edmonton, I was given the task to go into the office to give the letter to Bob. I kind of liked him. He was kind of uniony. He explained a few things to me. I said to him, they wanted people to talk, this was before the '77 strike. Something about why couldn't you have this arbitration instead of strike? It sounded like a good idea to me.

They wanted people to speak to them. No it couldn't have been before the '77 strike, must've been after, cuz I was district rep then. So I asked him that, and he explained it and it made sense to me. So I went over and talked to whoever had asked me to speak, and explained it all. He had the right attitude, but we didn't like somebody giving us these ultimatums. So we backed up and checked out what would happen if he did, because then we would have to try and find somebody. But what I found when I was president, you don't have to know a lot of stuff. You just have to know somebody that knows, and ask them to do things. So that's what we did. I digress.

While we were trying to develop these things, these other things happened. I had got on the board, that's one of the first things that happened. That's one of the first things we had to go through. We didn't know each other that well, but we learned from this experience. We can do what we want. If we don't want it, we'll just see what happens. Do things our way. Get away from AARN telling us what to do, the employers telling us what to do. We don't need the union. I have him that letter. He said, what's this all about. I said, we had this meeting. He said, you guys had a meeting? I said ya, and this is what we decided, and they've asked me to give you this letter. He said, you know what this means? I didn't know. He said, I'll be writing a reply tonight. So that was it. He said that, given that he would no longer be able to do whatever. We met with ?? and they drafted an ad for the executive director. They gave us a list and we interviewed a few of them. Then we hired Simon. We were just getting ready for bargaining, and somebody nominated me. I just joined here. I wanted to have 2 years on district rep to learn about unions. Then I would get on committees. But when we lined up our committees, membership sounded interesting. But they had too many for there, and they didn't have any for legislative. Which seemed dull. It's interesting now because I'm a parliamentarian and do bylaws and things. But asked people, what does notwithstanding mean? Simon says... I said, well why don't they just say that. Why is this notwithstanding the foregoing bullshit here. They needed people on legislative. They said, just get on the leg, we need somebody. We don't have enough members on the leg committee. So when I got on the leg committee, we could make proposals about changing the bylaws or whatever. I said, I'll like that. What I want, and this is what we have today, which is what I was concerned about a long time ago. What I want is to have when the negotiating committee is finished they make a recommendation to the members that we have at least a couple days to think it over. A meeting, they give the information, then we have a couple days to think it over before we vote.

I also said, the vote is tomorrow afternoon at 4 o'clock. That doesn't get all shifts. Well if they're really interested they can get up. These are night shift people. I said, put in there somewhere that we have a meeting at least 48 hours ahead of time. So we have time to think it over, read all the contract. Then that there also be a vote available for each shift, because we're shift workers. Gurty and the VP said, but the membership may reject that. You're losing momentum here. Membership don't always know everything and they may reject. I said, they should have the right to reject it. But the other good thing, if they have the time to think it over, and availability for everybody to vote, they can't come back on us. They can't say to us, you shoved this down my throat. They said, well put it in there.

So we had to argue with those people. Then the members adopted it, and that's still the way they do it. That was the big thing that bugged me in the first place. That's my legacy.

She called me up and said, ?? . . . I'm thinking that maybe the next round I will. I'd like to have another year of district rep. I had just started as chairman of the district. I was district rep and then I became chairman because somebody went. I was kind of enjoying it. Somehow I got hold of Al? of the oilworkers union. He was CLC. He gave us a 2-day workshop. It was great. I learned all about the union. We had a bunch of nurses from Ft. McMurray, had a dinner meeting, him there with a 2-day workshop. The members were all at that meeting and they said, ya that's your right. You can have a grievance committee. All this has to be decided between the union and management. So that was a wonderful workshop. It was called the shop steward workshop. They're gung ho, calling up the union with all these grievances. Then I had Reg Baskin come one time and speak. I had all these union people speak. I thought that's the direction our union should be going. Some of the other unions like the nurses, this professional stuff, we don't need it. This is what we need. I said I'm not gonna run, I want to do district chairman. Then the next time, because it's 2-year term, then I might run. Gurty was good, except I thought she was more into the professional stuff. She said, I think the timing is for you to run now. I think that's what we need. We need someone like you. I reminded her of that after. I said, you're the one that wanted me there. I was a little too militant, like Frankenstein gets away from you. But she said, I think the timing is now, I think you should run. So I get ?? . I phoned her or wrote a letter saying I thought she had done a great job, but I thought I could offer a different perspective. I thought I would run as president. She was really upset and bitter. She relied on me. She'd get me to go with her to Jim Rob, so it's a sense of betrayal. But I always saw things as issues and not personal stuff. She was devastated when I got elected at the thing. She just stood there and bawled. There wasn't any congratulations. People were pissed off that I ran against Gurty. The central district is still mad at me. She used to come to the board meetings after and get half the group against me. They'd have little caucuses in the bathroom. Wanted to try and get some sort of salary for me, they'd vote that down. Strikes are always very uniting for nurses. When the '82 strike came up, all fights are off. She came out there.

Everybody teamed together. We were being attacked by the government. And the public. We were baby killers. We really got dumped on. It just shows you, public support, I've always wondered why people want public support. I used to say sometimes, just shut up about. The postal worker used to say, public be damned. When you think of it logically, that's all you need from the public is to say ya, if this happens, people are going to die. The press would interview me. Like in the '88 strike, they're saying people are going to die. I said, they probably will, because we're not in there. But they would tone it down and say, this is just the government trying to scare people saying that people are going to die. Well no, they probably will, because our people aren't in there. But anyway that's another story.

In '82, our issues were working conditions. Basically the salary was settled. This is why the public, in my view wasn't interested. They don't understand things. We were still under this 2 weeks notice for what your rotation was. Our big push was working conditions. We wanted a ward or unit defined, because they couldn't jack around with us and have at least 2 people on. We wanted a year's notice of what our hours were. We took the firefighters calendar and showed them. See those little colored pictures? They know a year ahead when they have to work. What's wrong here? We finally got it down to 12 weeks notice. Our proposals every year no more than 7 days a week in a row. We had one weekend off a month. They could work us 8, 10 days in a row, split shifts. That was a big thing which we finally did get. A lot of that was agreed upon before the DIB report came in. But there was a lot still outstanding, so we went on strike. But that was the big issue. That's where our proposals come from, our members send them in every year. They're always on Article 7, which is hours of work. After '82 most of that's been settled. In fact, we had people coming back to work that had quit. We had people call the office and ask if it's true ... You have to have notice of your hours. They couldn't put you on Friday night and have you come back to work at midnight on Sunday. That was all gone. We spent a lot of time on that. They couldn't change your hours without penalties. Before that we had 12 hour shifts. We had a lot of those discontinued after that. If you had to look at 7 days on 2 days off, days evenings and nights, and said, oh I can have a 12 hr shift where I work 4 days on... That's what I did. I thought, rather than that swing shift, it's really hard on you, the 3 shifts, I'll work the 4 12 hours and at least get a break. So a lot of people were demanding 12 hr shifts. We'd go to the labour board and get them approved. So after we got these working conditions in there, we had people that discontinued the 12 hr shifts. We had what we considered good working conditions after that. They were required to do that, they couldn't change it. Vacations were normally in January and they had to tell you by March. These all seemed like what normal people would do. We tried to normalize it. We used the firefighters. When they say, of shift workers,... we said, we've got a whole thing here. We've got firefighters, that calendar. You're luckier than they are, because they don't have casual and part time staff, they have to over staff in nursing. We're not even asking for the same amount of shifts. They've got the same amount of people on days, evenings and nights. So that was the big issue. So when we went on strike in '82, there was a bit of a downturn too in the economy. Different people were out of work. They figured, keep it, you're lucky you've got a job. Interviews in CPC and they'd say, you're lucky you've got, and some of the husbands were laid off, so some of the nurses even were worried. They were saying, you should be lucky, we're doing this and that. I'd say, you can be a nurse. They'd say, I couldn't do that. Maybe you should be paid. Pay wasn't a big issue, what we were offered before we got in. But it was the working conditions that was a big issue. Why we were ticked at the government, we have a strike vote. Of course we don't follow the government's rules anymore, because it's all illegal so we do what we want. Back then it was legal, and if you voted not to strike you weren't allowed to re-vote. We got a strike vote, but we didn't get, like the one in '80 was 92%. But in '82 we got a strike vote of 70? It was still a good strike vote. It's the same as at the hospital. You might get a 70% strike vote, but

everybody goes on strike. You maybe can measure the amount of scabs you're going to get depending on your strike vote, but not necessarily. Our people also believe, ok the Alec and Grande Prairie are going out, we're going out. Nurses always say, if we're going to do it, we'll do it together. So they always want to know what everybody else is up to. They don't want to be out of the loop. If they're going to go on strike, we're going to go on strike. So most of all these locals that had voted not to strike then applied to the board to have another strike vote. The board said, being the union, opposes that they are. Hey, you can't have another kick at the cat. What business is it of theirs? These are our members. But that was when you had the government supervising strike votes. They said no. So there we had a situation where we had people that would've gone on strike, or they wouldn't have called for another strike vote. So that was the one thing. The other thing was that before we went on strike, and I don't think we would've had a strike, to be truthful. There was this leeriness about the economy.

. . . You had to say why it was important that we go on strike. It wasn't like people waiting from '77 to '80 saying, this time we're going, we don't care what the union says. This time you've got people saying, only 2 years are up, and are we talking strike again here? My speech at the '82 meeting was basically, this is what they're doing to you and this is why it's necessary. Sometimes you've got to make a decision, fish or cut bait. As for me, I'm going fishing. But they put us through a few loops. If you look at the labour legislation, there's a lot of legislation with UNA's name on it. Every strike we'd have, they'd dream up something new. After the '80 strike, they had this DIB. We had a crown hospital so we had to go to conciliation with them. The other hospitals had to go to mediation before they were even allowed to take a strike vote. All these delay tactics. I think we were ready. We hadn't taken a strike vote. So they had this DIB, Eric Lefsard, who is now a judge. He had agreed with some of our proposals. Now all the ones on the working conditions, on the no nurse assigned to work alone. One of the things he said, this is how patronizing they were. You know how they always figure, the union's not really representing the members. Even in this DIB thing, I forget his name, but he would say, I'm getting letters from members. I got mad and said, are you going to be the president now? We had a bit of a fight. Eric had to settle that. But anyway, on this note, the government wanted to vote on us. They ordered a vote and nobody came. A few people showed up, figured they'd get penalized. But we didn't vote, because we had arranged for a vote. The government's vote was there and they all came. All the government guys came and sat it out, but nobody came to vote. We had fun too. They had a few people that voted. They were saying, whoever votes, that's what it's going to be. But they backed off that. It was a government supervised vote on something. I'm not sure whether it was the DIB or some damn thing. Maybe it was the mediators report, and that's why they decided to have the DIB. That was something new that they legislated disputes. Disputes Inquiry Board. That was patronizing, because our members always voted on stuff anyway. So we had this vote all planned. The government said, you have to have a government supervised vote on this. We said, this is when the unions vote, we're advising everybody not to vote in the government's vote. We had people calling and saying, what

if we don't vote? Do we get penalized? You had the government saying, this is what it's going to be. If they choose not to come out there and vote, too bad. This is what's going to be imposed. So people were a little bit leery. Then there's people that the government says, it's the law you have to vote. I remember giving interviews and saying, as far as I know, we don't have any law saying you have to vote anywhere. Australia has a law saying they have to vote in public elections. So we had good fun. Our practise at that time was to make fun of the government. The premier Peter Loughheed, we had a good laugh with him too. I gave a little speech in the legislature about him. That was '82 or '80 strike. Loughheed and his boys don't take kindly to being outsmarted by a bunch of women. I thought it was funny. All the feminists got mad at me cuz I called them girls. But it was kind of a play on words. But anyway, on this thing, then they had this Disputes Inquiry Board. Eric Lefsard was appointed to do that. Once again patronizing, they thought we wouldn't show it to the members. It was so wonderful that if the members saw it they would vote for it. We're getting ready to courier the report out. We'd bring 2 reports for everybody, the president and secretary of every local across the province. So we're couriating this out to have the vote on it. We've got a delegate meeting coming up. So we couriated the stuff out, had the delegate meeting coming up, then we hear that the government is sending this stuff out. Because they don't think we will. So the locals ended up getting 4 copies of this. It wasn't bad. We looked at it. We probably wouldn't have had a strike vote, except his rationale for writing it up. We had people coming up to that microphone holding these reports. He says, who does he think he is? He says right here that nothing happens at night, so why do they need. There's no doctors making rounds, the patients are all asleep. Who do they think they are? And there was a strike. Same way as there probably wouldn't have been a strike in '88, same thing, economic conditions. The chairman of the labour relations board said they couldn't vote. Illegal to vote. Andy Simms. I ran into him the other day and hadn't seen him since that time. Arbitration at the law offices last year, ? is the chair.... I said, seems to be last time I saw you, you were ordering me to do something. He said, I think I was ordering you not to do something. I said, I always meant to thank you Andy. As a matter of fact, we were going to string a banner right across the labour relations board saying, thanks Andy, it's the best turnout we've had. I don't think we would've had the strike.

I can't remember what the penalties were. I guess they were the penalties that they tried to impose. Since that didn't work in the '88 strike, they added a new penalty under that, which was decertification and all that. But we were prepared for that already in the '88 strike. We said, they can always call the legislature together. Nurses always want to know what the worst thing is that can happen. Just to tell you about nurses, they don't like people patronizing them, being disrespectful. They consider those things disrespectful. This thing with the DIB. But in 1980, Simon's first meeting with members, we were at some rally talking about why we needed a strike vote. This was 1980. Nurses were saying, what if we get ordered back to work this time? What are we going to do? Simon said, I think that's unlikely, given the climate. Money was rolling in, there's a shortage of nurses, etc. Then somebody else got up and said, you haven't answered this question.

What if that happens? Everybody's starting to get restless down there. Who's this guy and why isn't he answering our questions? We'd already been talking about the possibility of this happening or that. If this happens, this is what we could do. The option will always be yours. We were all happy. They didn't say we're going on strike, they just want to know. In the '88 where Greckol just about had a heart attack, I'd say to her, what if this happens? She said, then they could get a bench for it. But would they ignore that? But you wouldn't ignore that? Yes but they want to know. And then if that happened what would you do? So the penalties under the '82 act were contempt of court and I forget what else. They didn't have decertification in '82. That was after the '88 strike they put that in.

In 1980 we talked about why I decided to run. My campaign was 4F, just a little homespun campaign. I was running against the current president. It was Fair, Frank, Friendly and Forceful, and any other Fs that may apply. I thought about what I wanted to run on, and I thought that's what I am. I also wanted to emphasize that I would be representative of a trade union. That's what this union would be. It wouldn't be an association. We'd be closer ties with trade unionists. We would be trade union. It was a no lose situation for me, because if I ran on that and they voted for me on that and that's what I could promote, there wouldn't be any comeback. If I lost on that, then I would say it's not that I was a bad person, that's not what they wanted. So either way I thought that was okay. So when they voted for me on that, I was very clear about what I stood for. If they voted for me, that's what I would try and promote. And I did. I didn't often get along with the board that was elected. In fact, towards the end of my presidency, we called it the 7-11 board, it was about 7 against and 5 for, so it was difficult to get that too. But I just remembered that this was what I ran on. This is what the members voted for me on. I pursued that. That was 1980.

1982 was a very significant year and very memorable. We had conflicts with several areas. We had a conflict with the professional association, with our own unionized staff, with the government, with the public. At different times everybody was against us. I even had a conflict with my own body. In fact, I had to go into the hospital during the '82 strike and have my appendix out. All of these things make 1982 a very memorable strike. In addition to what we called at that time Draconian legislation that they ended the '82 strike on.

All of our strikes were to improve the wages and working conditions of nurses. By doing that, that's what all unions are doing, but nurses hadn't traditionally done that. You're setting up a conflict situation with the government in the amount of funding they want to provide. Whether you're talking about wages or working conditions, they all cost money. There's also a difference. The people are not used to women involving themselves in conflict. There was the whole idea of the professional. People should be working because you're professionals, and you don't talk about money. Which of course is not true for most professionals, like doctors and lawyers. So there's always a conflict. Because we considered ourselves to be so far behind for the type of work we were doing, the supply

and demand situation, there was always what we considered a real catchup factor that we needed.

Oh ya, everybody would assume that. In one of our bargaining ones, CPR course, which most people in the public have so you can give resuscitation to people. And quite naturally, you have to have it in the hospital. It wasn't until 1984 that we actually got it in the contract that the employer would pay for it. That was something that, as a professional, you should take. You want to be able to look after your patients. I had to put it to them like, gee it doesn't rely on the employees to go in the evening on their own time to take a course they want. If you want a quality product that you're putting out and you're hiring people to do it, then you can pay for it. They didn't like talking in terms like that. They always tried to talk nurses into that you should do it because you're a nurse, and that's what's expected of nurses. I often would compare these things to women in the home. You would do it because that was your job as a woman. Even if you were in an abusive relationship with your husband, you wouldn't leave him because you would have to think of the children first. Same way as the nurses wouldn't go on strike, even if they weren't getting good wages and working conditions, because they should think of the patients first. So you had to continually say over and over, we're only responsible for the patients assigned to us during our working shift. The responsibility of the patients is with the employer, with the government. They kept putting that back on you. But the main thing, I think is what you're doing is trying to change. This is a group of women. You're trying to change your wages and working conditions. You're trying to get a bigger slice of the economic pie. That economic pie is divided up already. If you get a bigger slice, then somebody else gets less. Not only that, if you see a group of women who are prepared to face conflict, prepared to have people dislike them, which is very important for women and sometimes they'll give up power just to have people to approve them, there may be other women who'll get the same idea. There's a lot of women working for the government too. Social workers, you saw that happen with AUPE. Why we have strikes is what we proposed that we felt was reasonable, given the work we do and the supply and demand situation, given the fact we wanted to catch up on our wages, the government wasn't prepared to go along with in negotiations.

The year of discontent. 1985, we spent a lot of money in the '82 strike. 1985 was tough, because we lost the executive director. He not only supervised the staff, but he did the negotiations. We were very close friends as well. So that was difficult for me. I didn't have somebody on that level to confide in. I was in the office, but there was no VP or secretary treasurer in the office at that time. So I really didn't have anybody at that level to discuss things with. We were in the middle of a health unit strike, so we had to take a staff member from there and put them in the health unit strike. Then we had to decide what to do about hospital bargaining. Of course the members are all up in gears, because what's going on. Must've been some sort of fight between Simon and Margaret. Now we don't have a negotiator. We're coming into bargaining, what's going to happen. That was the last year he did the contract, we didn't get a raise that year. So we've really got to push

this year, and we really don't have a chief negotiator. So it's gotta be somebody's fault, so it's gotta be mine. There's always a group that's opposed to your principles. Our values may be the same, but a different way of approaching it. So that group would be gathering people to say, ya that's how she's always been like. I got a few phone calls, but not too many. Generally the members were supportive. The board is a bit different. For some reason the staff were in a snit. Remember we didn't have an executive director, so we started advertising for one. In the meantime, I assigned one of the employees to do an acting role there. But we needed somebody to do the hospital bargaining. So I asked one of the senior ones, but he wasn't able to because he was too busy doing something. The other senior one was doing the health unit bargaining. The others were fairly junior. So then it came down to either myself or I asked Sheila Greckol, our lawyer if she'd do the bargaining. We put it to the board. They didn't want Greckol. The rate wasn't bad. But she also wanted us to sign this thing about legality and stuff, cuz she knew what we were like. If we were going to do any illegal stuff she wanted to be exempt. That ticked the board off. They didn't need anybody like that negotiating for them. She was more worried about her legal stuff. She explained, she was a lawyer, she was there to uphold the law, and she couldn't be seen to be part of anything like that if anything like that should come about. So they nixed that. Then I'm the chief negotiator now for that round of bargaining. We didn't do bad in that round. We had a policy where we voted on the last offer of the employer. If the employees voted against the last offer of the employer, that meant they were going on strike. If they voted to accept the last offer, that's what we got. We didn't do any further bargaining. And the employer knew that. So we didn't get a vote. They voted to accept the last offer, so we had to go there and shake hands and take it. But we got a lot of stuff in the ? and stuff like that. We got an increase. We didn't get an increase the year before, but we got an increase. But it wasn't the substantial gains that we were looking for, so we didn't have the strike that year. But we didn't have very much money so we've got people who aren't very happy. When I went into bargaining, having to do the chief negotiator work, our employees were once again in bargaining. I couldn't do that so I got the VP to do that. She had no experience in bargaining. Barb Deopold, who you should interview. Why I think you should interview her is that she comes from a small town, Bonnyville. I had it easy in some respects, because my husband was not actively working against me. I had no kids or other responsibilities. But she had a couple of kids. But tougher than me. She'd be good to interview. She came right up to '86. We had a committee to interview for the executive director. All this stuff is going on while I'm doing the bargaining. ... ?? I remember them sending me a letter saying that they expected that I wouldn't be using this ERO, who was fairly new, to do any bargaining. Because she was just there as a learning experience. I said, forget it then. We told her she could go back to whatever her duties were, and then it was just me with no assistance except for the committee. We did pretty good, all told. For whatever reason, 2 or 3 people ran against me. I didn't win on the first ballot, though. Remember I told you that '86 Gainers strike had a lot of effect on me. I just thought, you're putting a lot of energy into something that these people, I don't know. I just compared ourselves with the Gainers people and thought, I don't know if I'm prepared to

fight and argue for nurses. What we have is an easy thing compared to what these people have. It's not that I wanted to go work in another trade union movement, but I saw the contrast there and I just didn't have the heart for it anymore. It thought, we quibble about little things and worry about a strike that's 15 days and can be elitist. I got discouraged and decided I wasn't going to run. That may have been why some people decided to run, because I think I had talked about not running for that round of bargaining. Plus I was tired. I was doing all this stuff. People jump on you for stuff. So I decided I wouldn't run. I don't know why I decided to run. But I remember I was watching Nelson Mandela talking about something. He'd been in prison for 22 years. I told you there was this group that would be opposed to my values and the other people that were running the union at that time. They were kind of gaining in size. I didn't really want to see them take over at this point. So I thought, I guess I'll run. I didn't even have campaign buttons or anything. People came up to me and said, Margaret do you want to be elected? This was in '86. People called me and wanted to be on my committee. I said, ok I guess I can run. But I was not very enthusiastic about running. It's kind of stupid to say that, isn't it? But I remember that at the time. They said are you running or do you want to win?

Oh yes, I was involve in that. So I was glad that I did run after all. Because then the members decided to go on strike in '88, and they did need someone like me that was very strong. By that time our board, if it had been up to our board, they wouldn't have gone on strike. Our board was then, remember I said it kept turning. We called it 7-11 board at that time, because there were 11 people that had the same values as the other officers and myself. And 7. But by the time the '86 elections were over with, I lost my VP and then the secretary treasurer resigned because of some policy that the board wanted to implement. Some sort of softening of policy toward the department of labour. There was this move that maybe if we were nicer, if the government would be better to us. They wanted to get, let's not always be confrontational. Maybe that's where we're having a problem, is because we're being confrontational. Maybe if we were nicer like some of the other unions and have public relations and stuff, they wanted to do things like that. We kept saying, why would you want to do that? We're on the news twice a week. That's a better deal. But there was this group that wanted that change.

But in '86 the board changed. But the members didn't. The boards changed so that the 7-11 board that I talked about, there was only 7 plus myself. So there was quite a shift to this conservative approach. But we went into bargaining again. So we're coming into bargaining again. This nice approach, let's be less confrontational, that's what started it all. I think we had one of the lowest ingoing demands – like \$1.50 on the table. That was the debate at the meeting for the '88 round of bargaining. Once again we're in a situation where the economic situation is not so good. Nurses are very conscious about people, and remembered being called baby killers in the '82 strike. That contract is not that big a deal. They'd like to keep what they had, a few slight improvements. We got fairly substantial gains in the contract the year before in discipline and some of the language articles. They thought let's be moderate this time. If we're reasonable, the employer will be reasonable. Well that's not necessarily the case. So they put the moderate demands, and that's what

we went in with. By that time another executive director came along and we lost her again just before bargaining. I decided I'm not going to do all this stuff again. I decided not to be on the bargaining committee for that round. But we went in with very modest proposals. I was just reading my analysis of that ? why they're all mad at me, things I said. But they were a fairly conservative committee. We went into bargaining, and rather than the employer being reasonable, the employer put rollbacks on the table. In every strike we were on in every bargaining situation, there was always a shortage of employees in the hospitals. We always had that situation. So then they put rollbacks on the table. They refused to give a wage offer, and there was rollbacks to our layoff and recall article. They were large rollbacks but they were significant and the member didn't want them. Compensation and disability things. So how our bargaining progresses is it all comes from the members. Members send in proposals. We used to have a time line, because we believe in time lines and momentum and pressure and all that. Those timelines would be set out before we went into bargaining. By such and such a date we'd do thus and so. If this happens we do thus and so, everything's all planned. Our proposals come in from the individual locals. The members go to a meeting, they propose proposals, the local sends the proposals in. That goes into the committee, who's elected. Then they pick all those proposals and prepare them and send them back to the locals in a proposal book, with a rationale for each one. They vote on that. That's what we go into bargaining with. We have it already set up that if you're bargaining that our strike, at that time the contracted ended December 31st. So we have demand setting meetings set at whatever. We go to bargaining in September. Meeting with the delegates is going to be December such and such. At that point the negotiating committee gives their assessment of what's going on here, and they recommend to the membership whether we should accept this last offer or go on strike if we don't have a settlement by then. First of all, the negotiating committee thought they should have some more time to do it. Somehow we got the demand setting meeting January 5th. They were prepared to make a recommendation. Not the demand setting meeting, the reporting meeting. The reporting meeting is January 5th. So that was a bit of a delay. In that reporting meeting the committee reported that they were trying to get a settlement. We had to point out to them we didn't just want a settlement, we wanted an improved contract settlement. So part of that was saying that they had reported on what the status was and they had agreed to a couple of these rollback positions. The delegates directed them to go back to the negotiating committee and withdraw that. It was big in the Journal. There was a debate for the negotiating, normally in instances like that they negotiating committee resigns, because you've lost your credibility with the employer. You have the right to expect that the person who's on the other side of the bargaining table has the authority to act on behalf of the people that it represents. Normally in those circumstances you should resign. They didn't resign. There was a vote, but it was defeated. They didn't want to give specific direction, but they did direct them to go back and withdraw that. So they went back to the bargaining table and withdrew that. Quite naturally, the employer charged them with unfair labour practise, negotiating in bad faith. So they were getting prepared for that. At the same time we were gearing up for our strike vote. The employer filed

unfair labour practise. Then they labour board to enforce the legislation that we couldn't have our strike vote. Similar to that DIB report, giving that order was what agitated the nurses into wanting to have a strike. Once again, lack of respect for the nurses. Nurses don't like being told what to do, whether it's by the union, by the professional association, by the employer. So the labour board, that was a really busy time between that period of time. Somehow the national press got hold of that and the press here. There was this big kafuffle about we should vote proceeding. Ya, cuz we've planned this and the members are going to do it. So there was quite a bit of conflict there. Not only from the press and employer and labour relations board, but from the Alberta Federation of Labour, from our own lawyers, giving us this great advice about what we should do. I think Grecko came up with a suggestion at one point that the employers would be prepared to withdraw both the unfair labour practise and the thing on voting, withdrawing the action to stop us from having a vote if we would go back and agree to what the negotiating committee had agreed to in the first place. I'm saying, what's in it for us? What's in it for you? You'd be able to legally have your vote. I said, we're going to have the vote anyway. What we're voting on is an improvement in the contract. This isn't any deal. Yes but you'll have this penalty and get bench warrants, arrests. Then the next thing was to change the date of the vote. I couldn't tell the members to do that anyway. First of all, they wouldn't do it. You have a president, you can tell them to move it until they had this hearing or something. This is one thing about nurses. They're very regulated people. We're used to rules and regulations. If you're told to give 15 mg of morphine, you don't go and give 75 mg. of Demerol. They like to know things ahead of time. They like to know all the details. That's why I had an idea there was going to be a strike, because before once you're coming up for a strike vote, then the negotiating committee and officers invite you to all the meetings and talk to all the members. You try and get a sense of what's going to happen. You really don't know. But all these people were saying, ok if we decide to vote to strike, can they penalize us for voting? What would the penalty be? If we decide to go on strike, what can they do to us? I'm a new immigrant, can they do anything about that? Will this affect my family? Will this affect my ability to cross the border? Is there going to be a charge on me? Can they lock me up? So we would ask our lawyers, what's the penalty for this and that. There could be a penalty of civil contempt. So what does that involve? Well it would be a jail term no longer than a year and a \$1000 fine. Ok, then if they still didn't do what they were told? Oh you wouldn't be able to do that. But they want to know. They just want to know all this, so they're obviously seriously considering a strike vote. I remember Glenrose local coming in to me and saying, Margaret, I have to tell you we're not going to get a strike vote at our local. We've talked to the people and told them it's important for us to all get together. Remember they were crown hospitals. They're not that unhappy with the employer. They figure this ok, it's not going to affect, so we're not going to get a strike vote. Once the labour board ordered that we were not allowed to have the strike vote, that really turned the tide. In fact in this local the president was in there making picket signs, because the members had voted 90% in favour of a strike vote. While nurses didn't want the rollback, they weren't in a particular mood to go on strike. There wasn't that much on the table, for heavens sake, to be taking an illegal strike. But

what really got their back up was when the labour relations board ordered that they couldn't even take this vote. This isn't Nazi Germany, we'll do what we want. Furthermore they'd already planned for it, and they went ahead with the vote. This hearing took place and didn't end till 4 o'clock in the morning. I went home finally at 2 because I figured I'd need my rest for tomorrow morning. So I didn't really know what they had ordered at the end, because I was incommunicado and they were not to have my number. So I turned the radio on the next morning to find out what happened. Here CBC is talking about how they're going to be interviewing this person from the Alec and this person from the Mis. I'm thinking, what about the strike vote, they should be at the polls. Why would they be coming in at the thing. But CBC kept saying, they'll be in here pretty soon. Then the next thing was the interviews at the polls. These people figured the cops are going to get us, so the polls are supposed to open at 8, they opened at 6. Sort of like Little Red Riding Hood. You get there early, the wolf and the pig or whatever. We got the order not to have the strike vote, but I assumed everybody was having the strike vote. But when they started saying these people are coming for an interview, I thought well they should be doing the votes. The locals opened their polls at 6 a.m. and people were skipping across the ice coming to vote. Most of the polling was completed by, they figured the government and police wouldn't, they were waiting for the cops. They were prepared for that and voted before they come and grab us. They thought they were going to come and take their ballot boxes. Nurses could run a revolution. They had all this planned, no input from me or staff. This is what these people dream up at the locals. They had to vote early so they could have the voting in and get the ballots counted before these bad guys came along and seized their ballot boxes or whatever. They went ahead and did it. We got a big strike mandate. The strike was going to be on.

First of all, before we even hit the bricks, there was different fines and contempts for having held the strike vote when we were told not to. And the national press came into town. They would call, is there going to be a strike or not? Is it worthwhile to come? But the next day in the board room on the first day of the strike, it was full. All of this stuff from that point on, once we had the strike vote, then when we went on strike the questions continually would be, well now that the government says you have to do this or that, or now that you've been ordered to do this, now that you've had the contempt charge, aren't you going back to work? Our standard response was, we're on strike here for an improved contract. We won't be going back to work until we get a negotiated contract. And we didn't.

The employer finally gave us a wage offer about 10 days into the strike. Then they took the rollbacks off later on. Then the committee signed an agreement and went back to work.

I wasn't personally charged. The union was charged with criminal contempt. The individual locals, because all the local executive and the board were prepared to be charged with contempt and possible jail terms. I gave a speech on that and said this is going to be tough. Those people that aren't prepared to run with us. This is before we knew they were going to do all this stuff. But we knew coming into the '88 strike. So the speech I gave in '87 at the annual meeting was, we don't need any Chicken Littles here.

Anybody who's not prepared to run with it, you may as well step aside and let somebody else take over. And some people did. Some people said, if that bargaining comes into a strike and we have all these fines, I'm not prepared to do that. So the executive that came up, and even my board by that time... In fact, they tried to subvert it. The negotiating committee reported directly to the membership. They did not report to the board. The board wanted to change that, because after all the board is the legal representative for the organizations. They wanted the negotiating committee to report to them before there was going to be any recommendation of strike to the membership. If they had, the board wouldn't have supported it. The board was all out doing xmas shopping. I'm thinking, save your pennies, there's probably going to be a strike here. In fact, I had this one conservative member. She had it all itemized how much money, cuz we only finished up the health unit strike not long before. We had \$1.5 million or something. She calculated it all, how many members we had, how much we had in the strike fund, and if they all took it we'd only have a strike for 3 days. Well not everybody takes strike pay. I didn't and a lot of people don't. We are very good at that. We do put aside personal differences, I told you about the previous president during the '82 strike. She came on line, we fought together, we were very solid. The same way in the strike, all the people that were opposed to the strike...once the strike was on, then they're solidly behind it and put on hold all the little fights. Then you get back to them after the strike is over.

We won the strike. We didn't make significant gains. I was just looking at the analysis I did after. It was a lot about respect. We did maintain that, that you have to respect us. That you have to deal fairly with us. We're not afraid, we will work together, and we're tough.

No I didn't run. As I said, I didn't want to run in '86. It sounds flaky, but something told me I should run. Maybe that's what the something was, for the '88 strike. I'm not scared of anything, other than physical. If somebody said they were going to torture me, I can say that now. If somebody says they were going to give me some physical pain, I probably would sell out everybody. But as far as, if you're prepared to lose your job, if you're prepared to lose your life, there's a lot you can do. I don't like bullies. To me, that's why I got in the union in the first place. They don't bother me. A lot of nurses feel the same way I do, but they maybe are too scared to express it. But if you express it, they'll go along and support you on it. Our members are very strong, and I've always said that. Talk about me being militant, I'm not that militant. I was just a leader who was prepared to be as militant as my membership, to lead them into something if they want to go. I'm not one of those leaders that stick up my finger and see which way the wind is blowing. I'll also tell them, these are your options. ... We had a lot of people who came and gave support. All the unions, the federation. I took them home with me, stacks from people who would write in and say, Dear Margaret, I'm just writing to you again because I think it's so unfair what they're doing to you. We're only senior citizens, so we can't afford too much, but I just want to send you another \$50. It'd just make you cry to read the letters. In addition to the unions, guys would come in and say, you girls have balls, I wish our guys had enough jam as you. I didn't get mad at them for calling me a girl. Give me a cheque for \$10,000 or something. Besides the federation and CLC, Bob White. He just

called one day, we're not worried about money. We're just going to see this thing through. The Energy Chemical Workers offered us the use of their offices. Part of this when they charged the union with criminal contempt if we didn't go along with it, they were going to seize all our assets. We didn't have any assets anyway. We just took all our money and sent it out to the locals so they couldn't take that away. The locals made sure they didn't take it anywhere. They put their names into the Wild Rose account. The bank said, hey I know what you're doing here. But the Energy Chemical Workers offered us their office. I said in my speech, they're kinda cute guys, that would be nice. Then Bob White called and said, we can give you a couple hundred thousand if you need it. Just let us know. Stuff like that was wonderful.