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## Guide to the Mildred Edmondson Oral History

### Collection number: MS 3523

California Historical Society

North Baker Research Library  
San Francisco, California

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Mildred Edmondson Oral History

**Collection number:** MS 3523

**Creator:** Edmondson, Mildred

**Repository:** California Historical Society, North Baker Library  
San Francisco, California 94105-4014

**Language:** English

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#### Preferred Citation

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#### Interview Information

Born March 14, 1914

Now living at her home in San Rafael, California

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Interviews held on April 22, May 11, June 21 and November 11, 1976

Time of Interviews: Approximately four hours

The following is a transcription of an interview with Mildred Edmondson, intended as part of the series on progressive and trade union women for California Historical Society Women in California Collection.

Originally Mrs. Edmondson was asked to participate because of her activities just prior to World War II when, as an employee of the Department of Employment, she made a field survey of the comparison of wages between men and women. This was printed as "Trade Union Handbook for Women" and used throughout the Bay Area by the Department of Employment. Unfortunately no copy of this study could be located.

The interview was done, as were several others, in the enthusiasm of a new tape recorder, a burning ambition to record women's histories, and a lack of expertise and training in the field. Ms. Edmondson recognized this. Through kindness and friendship she allowed the interview to proceed, only indicating her thoughts and opinions at the end when asked her thinking on the interview.

When the interview did not develop as originally planned, the interviewer went off in hap hazard directions. She now feels this is a sketchy narrative, dealing with the life of a woman who was unusual in her field for her time, and who surmounted many difficulties in the course of her life. The interview, indeed, does not treat her or her contribution to women's history fairly.

The saving grace may be that it does touch on certain aspects of personal development of a woman who became socially conscious, active in union causes as well as "women's issues." Her experiences can offer students and researchers some insight into the problems of women making a living for themselves during this period of the thirties and forties.

### **Interviewee**

Ms. Edmondson is a slight, vibrant person, very outgoing. She is highly respected in her field, and is very knowledgeable about many aspects of work outside of her field of Rehabilitation Counseling.

### **Conduct of the Interview**

The interviews were conducted at Ms. Edmondson's home in Marin County. It is a charming cottage with a garden in which she works some mornings. The house is modestly furnished; and has an excellent collection of paintings and objects picked up in her travels. Bookcases abound with well thumbed books.

### **Editing**

The original transcript was corrected by Ms. Edmondson, and has been retyped with very little additional editing by the interviewer. Only slight changes were made in sentence structure, cutting of false starts, and occasional duplication of thoughts.

### **Narrative Account of the Interview**

The interview begins with childhood experiences, family life, schooling and outside activities. It establishes an early close relationship with narrator's father which develops into respect and friendship. It then continues with college years, job career, including a period as Trade Union Liaison Officer with the War Manpower Commission during World War II, and her activities in the State and Federal Workers Union organization, two marriages, the birth of a child. Then her fight for a job with the State Rehabilitation Board on the grounds of overt discrimination against women. It concludes with her opinions on various aspects of women's lives and problems today.

Mrs. Edmondson represents a forerunner of the career woman of today, as she indicates that women didn't even consider work so much of a career as a job during the thirties and forties.

It is regrettable that the interviewer is the second wife of Ms. Edmondson's first husband. Thus matters of motherhood, divorce, and even remarriage are carefully skirted. This naturally leaves great holes in the interview.

Lucy Kendall

February, 1978

- Literary Property Rights
- Interview History
- Transcript
- Priorities Control Office Description War Manpower Commission
- Functions of Priorities Control Division War Manpower Commission
- Survey Questionnaire of Mildred Kendall War Manpower Commission
- Job Description - Mildred Kendall Union Liaison Officer for War Manpower Commission

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- Letter to Mildred Kendall from Frank Burk, Business Representative of Sheet Metal Workers International Assn.
  - Newspaper clipping on Y.W.C.A. dinner in recognition of Women in War Industry
  - Letter from Mildred Kendall to Albert J. Evers regarding Job Classification
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