
Guide to the Dorothy Elizabeth De Losada Oral History

Collection number: MS 3522

California Historical Society

North Baker Research Library
San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Dorothy Elizabeth De Losada Oral History

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Access

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Interview Information

Born September 17, 1921

Now living at her home in San Francisco, California

Interview held on March 4, 1976

Interviewer: Lucy Kendall for the CHS Library, Women in California Collection under auspices of Manuscript Department, Lynn Bonfield Donovan, Manuscript Librarian

Time of Interview: Approximately one and one half hours

The following is a transcription of a brief interview with Dorothy Elizabeth (Betty) De Losada, who has spent her life as a working woman, a mother (raising two children of her second husband), a political and union activist, and in the establishment of a career.

The most important part of the transcript is the narrator's awareness of women's role in the trade union movement of the 1930's and 1940's. She was interviewed for the Women in California Collection as part of the series on trade union and left wing women of the 1920's and 1930's.

The Interviewee

Betty De Losada is much younger than most of the women being interviewed in this project. She is a vibrant, vivacious, attractive woman with a good deal of enthusiasm and energy for anything she participate in. This is reflected now in her community activities and in her work as a member of the Landmarks Board. She knows San Francisco as only a native who is in love with her City. She has innumerable acquaintances and an astounding number of friends from every section and social strata of the City.

At present she is working as public information officer for the San Francisco Unified School District.

Among the many other questions unasked in this interview was that of religion. She was raised as a Catholic, but her mother did not believe in the church as a necessity. Thought it just took money. Betty lived in a Catholic community, took communion and participated in church life because all her friends did. She drifted away from the church during her high school days and never returned.

Conduct of the Interview

The interview was conducted after dinner in the home of the interviewer who had just started compiling oral histories. It was conducted almost as an exercise, With no research, no expertise, a faulty recorder, and no understanding of oral history techniques, the interview would have been a complete and utter disaster had it not been for the intelligence and perspicacity of the interviewee.

Editing

There has been little or no editing outside of minor corrections by the narrator, and small changes in sentence structure, omission of redundant phrases and elimination of crutch words occasionally.

Narrative Account of the Interview

Betty comes of French parentage, was born and raised in the French community of San Francisco, attended Lowell High school and worked both as a waitress and in a foreign language theatre. She went to the University of California at Berkeley, using money she had won in an essay contest.

In college she became involved in left wing and school activities. It was here she met her husband to be. During her college years she worked, during the summer months, both as a textile worker and a warehouse worker.

After marriage, and because of the war, she dropped out of college, went to work in the shipyards. Then she worked as a civil service worker under the aegis of the Warehouse Union, Local 6, ILWU. She did some union organizing then.

Her husband went into the army and she followed him to Tennessee where they both became involved in the Highlander Folk School.

The interview continues with her return to San Francisco after the break up of her marriage; her re-admittance to the warehouse union and her consequent activities within the union as an official, a shop steward, a member of the strike committee, and so on.

She then briefly goes into her second marriage with a man she met in the course of her union work, and talks of her helping raise two of his children.

Sensing the possible difficulties of continuing work in the warehouse union, she decided to return to school to get her degrees. She did this while continuing to work and function both as a member of the union and as a mother and wife.

The interview concludes with some opinions and reflections on her activities and comments on her present interests.

The interviewer feels strongly that this interview does not do justice to De Losada's contribution to women's history. Perhaps it should be considered a series of short and inadequate narrations of sections of her life until all the errors of commission and omission can be rectified by a full and detailed taping, backed by adequate research. This will probably take about twenty hours of narration.

Lucy Kendall
Interviewer

February 11, 1978