

This government project employed about 1,000 clerical and professional workers, many of them young people newly out of college and single, such as I, and drawn from all sections of the country. On the job, they were ambitious, hard-working, anxious to get ahead. Off the job, they were gregarious, looking for social connections in a strange city. Because we were out-of-towners with our jobs as our common bond, we naturally grouped together with other employees who had similar interests.

We ate lunch and dinner together, frequently in a Chinese restaurant in Philadelphia's Chinatown where our sharing of dishes reinforced our sense of belonging together.

We encouraged each other to acts of outrageous behavior in our search for entertainment, to divert ourselves and to outdo each other. On one dreary Saturday afternoon when time hung heavy on our hands, one of our crowd dared us to walk down Market St. from 30th St. to 10th St., a stretch heavily populated by saloons, and drink a boilermaker in each of the saloons. For the innocents among you, a boilermaker is a shot of whiskey with a beer chaser, a favorite drink of workers in Western Pennsylvania.

My first drink of this devilish concoction went down smoothly and I thought "this is going to be a piece of cake." But by the time we reached 24th St., my eyes had glazed over, I had developed a ferocious headache, and my kidneys were drumming into my back, "no more liquids. No one made it to 10th St. Even you, virtual strangers, would shed a tear in sympathy at my plight were I to describe the agonies I suffered Saturday night and Sunday. I dragged myself to work on Monday and noticed the empty desks usually occupied by my companions. It gave me great pleasure to note that he who had proposed the drinking orgy was also absent.

Our youthful exuberance also got us into trouble with the law. We were working temporarily out of a building on 30th St. where labor market data on the movement of textile mills from the North to the South were kept. Across the street was the 30th St. station of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad with a wide traffic-free area fronting on the entrance.

It was Spring the weather was beautiful, someone had a soft ball and there across the street was the perfect ball park. We chose up sides and played box ball. A railroad official came out and told us we were trespassing but we paid no attention to him. He came out a second time and again we ignored him and went on playing. There was no third warning. Suddenly we were surrounded by police, handcuffed and hauled off to jail.

We waited anxiously in jail not knowing what was in store for us. I earned the admiration of my cellmates when I closed my eyes and pretended to go to sleep when all the time my heart was

pounding away. As it turned out it all came to nothing. Our Director pulled political strings to get us released with even our arrests expunged from the record after we had agreed in writing not to transgress again .

To be truthful, our riotous behavior was really the exception. We had discovered that the center for liberal social intercourse and political action in the city were the homes of the Leovs and the Blitsteins in a brownstone building on 15th St. Everyone was welcome there provided one helped raise funds for Russian War Relief and or other causes.

Dr. Leov was an interntionally renowned dentist, his in-laws who shared the building were the parents of Mark Blitstein composer of the opera, The Cradle Will Rock, an instant success on Broadway although a working class play. We got to know Mark, heard snatches of the music as he was in the throes of <sup>osition</sup> competition and simply loved the music. Among other celebrities we met there were Clifford Odets and the famous black primitive painter, Horace Phippen.

At work, we were having some success in enrolling workers in an AFL union, the American Federation of Government Workers. We had real grievances: the pay was too low and jobs were erratically classified. One of our members composed a song which expressed the sentiment of the employees, to wit:

Reclassification is what I desire  
Reclassification much better if higher  
Reclassification before I expire  
Oh I want to be reclassified.

One of our most active members was Olga Vigod, an intelligent, beautiful, warm, loving woman who enchanted all who knew her and who was most generous in helping her friends when they needed help. I had just been elected treasure of the local when I was told that Olga was suffering from bronchitis, needed to go to a warmer climate but had no health insurance or money. Because we were a new agency we were not covered by an insurance plan.

We cast around to see how we could help Olga. We found that we could be covered by a Blue-Cross, Blue Shield Plan provided we could enrol 90% of the employees in the plan. Everybody was cooperative and we reached the required enrollment in two days. We also collected \$2000 to send her to Florida. Olga recovered. Olga and her husband, Phil, and my wife and I remained close friends for years. And all the years of her life she was the good Samaritan.