

LAURA EVANS TAPES -- Mazzulla Collection, Amon Carter Museum

Tape #4 -- Interview: 5/4/51

005'

When did you first go up to Leadville, Laura?

A: '95

Q: 1895.

A: Yeh. I served my apprenticeship not quite a year, and came down here in '96.

Q: You were in Denver for awhile, weren't you?

A: Oh yes. I didn't know anything about this business in Denver. But I fell very readily into it. (inaud) Well, you don't know what to do, the money's so fast and ... everything ... excitement...

Q: You say a girl could get \$75 a night?

A: Oooh! That wasn't anything.

Q: (woman's voice) One girl?

A: Oh, of course. Well, my dear girl, that wasn't anything. Paydays make a couple a hundred.

Q: (woman) In those days that was an awful lot of money.

A: Well, you just helped yourself to what they had. You let a miner go back up the mountain with any money, they'd think you were crazy.

They'd come down, the Diamond Drill Boys used to come down -- Ten dollars an hour. But, that was by hand. I wonder what they'd think now if they were alive about drillin' by electricity. And then the black diamonds, those were very expensive. They used black diamonds in their drills. Well, I remember having men throw a fifty in your lap. And maybe you'd get 'em so full they couldn't see straight. Champagne, beer-- you know there's tricks in all trades -- and have the boys take 'em back home.

Leadville had the old wooden sidewalks, and all the water, the drainage, would come down the gutters, and uh, down West Fifth Street. Then you could come up, you get mad at somebody, you hit him in the head and let him fall in the running water, couldn't ya. Oh, we were hateful up there.

(Laughter)

030'

(Laura): <sup>I met</sup> ~~And that~~ Stratton, that wealthy Stratton, you know.

In the express office the clerk called me up and he says, "Laura, there's a package here, but the boy..." up there in the telegraph office we had messenger boys, but he said, "I'm just afraid I won't be able to get your dress down tonight."

*I'll be up after it*

"Eooo," I said. I didn't have only a half a block to go. And he sat in a cage in the back, and I walked in and I said, "Show me my dress." He gave it to me and stratton is sitting there. He introduced me and he said, "Step in the <sup>guide</sup> other room and put it on, Laura, and let's see how you look in it."

Laura cont'd:

It was a creation of pink satin. This part up here was watered silk with big pink plush dots. It was about that high. Big Queen Anne collar and them big puffed sleeves. You couldn't walk in the door, you had to go in sideways, you know -- crinoline. And then in the back, came in a point here, came out about that wide and out that far. It just hung over the train...

Well, I put it on and I come out and said,  
 "Well, what d'you think of it." And the skirt, you know, all festoons -- An' Stratton says,  
 "If that's a society broad, how has she got up here." (?? inaud)  
 Express man sez, "Don't you know her?"  
 Stratton, "Why no, I never saw her."  
 Ex. man, "She's one of our Fifth Street girls."  
 He (Stratton) wouldn't believe it, you see. "My," he said,  
 "She looks like a society broad." *band*  
 He didn't know I was a tough one -- I thought I was tough.  
 So I went in and dressed and one night Stratton comes down.

There were nine of us in the house. (Stratton) says to the Landlady (the Madam), "Give that girl that..." she wore a big purse here -- "Give her the purse."  
 She says, "What for?"  
 He says, "She's gonna be landlady for a few minutes. Porter!! Bring in two bottles of champagne."  
 Well, that was twenty dollars. He gives her the money and she puts it in her purse. He turned to me, "Now, Laura..."  
 I said, "I don't want to be landlady." I wouldn't handle that money. I said, "I wouldn't put my hand in there. You help me -- I'll hold the purse out like this and give me the money and I'll give it to the landlady and let her put it in herself."

060'

But he liked me 'cause he said I was so independent. Well, after he got through, he says, "I'd like to go slumming." I said, "Come on. I'll take y'around."  
 So, you see, there was five houses on West Fifth Street, and there was eight to ten girls in each house. They didn't associate with State, don't you see, West Fifth was s'posed to be the high places. Well, I took him all over and I said, "Oh, we gotta go down on State Street. Now," I says, "you got to wait 'til changing hour down here."  
 He says, "What's that." *laughter*  
 I said, "When the girls come in on the day shift." You see, there was fifty girls working in the dance hall. Fifty night and fifty day. The one that was on at night, Ellie Perkins, had two hacks -- take the tops down and they just pile those girls in there like sardines. (six stickin' all over -- sox, purses and... ?? all very inaud) 'Course, they were pretty full, and they couldn't come, only the other side of Fourth and Harrison Avenue.

*Well, what society  
broad is that up here?*

(2A)

"Well," he says, "I've had a wonderful experience."  
I said, "Have you, really?"  
He said, "Yes. And now, I'll tell you. I don't want you  
for yourself."  
I thought: "I'm glad of that. I don't know who you are."  
I didn't know who he was, tell you the truth.  
"But," he says, "we'll go to the Vendome."

080'

Well, the landlady, just previous to that, her sweet-  
heart was taken sick. We go across the street, she does,  
and rents the rooms with opera glasses and sees a woman  
trailing over her lawn. She says, "I'm gonna get that  
woman!"  
(This makes no sense -- I have no idea what L.E. means here)

085'

Well, we go in to the Vendome. We get in the elevator,  
and we don't know how to stop the thing. And it crashes  
up to the third floor. Now that's how rough these things  
used to be, you see. We didn't know what floor it was on.  
Well, the man that run the place, he was gonna have us arrest-  
ed. They finally did get us out of there. Manager was  
Mr. Morris, ran the Brown Hotel there in Denver for years.  
And I said, "Who is the manager?"  
Man in charge, "Mr. Morris."  
I said, "Well, Morris isn't goin' to arrest us. Don't  
you know him? That's so-and-so's man." He was one of  
the girl's men in the house, but we never knew who he was.  
Well, finally we managed to get out of the hotel.  
He said, "If ever you or Flossie (??) walk into this  
hotel, I'm gonna have you arrested."  
I said to this gentleman, "I'd rather not go up to the hotel."  
"No," he said, "I just want to confirmate (confirm it??)."

But I never used to drink so much I'd lose my head. I was  
thinkin' to myself all the time.

100'

Well, we went up there. Oh, what a beyoutiful room! Gave  
you a flannel night shirt down to there.  
So he (Stratton) says, "I'm gonna take you up to the mines  
with me in the morning."  
Well that just tickled me to death, you know. I'd rather drive  
a horse, or ride one ...  
"Oh," I said, "That'll be fine."  
So the next morning, his coachman came. He had his own pair  
of horses, with a sleigh. Big buffalo robes, you know, and  
then in the bottom they'd put gallon jugs of boiling hot  
water for your feet.  
"Ooo," I said. "Isn't this lovely!" You oughta seen me  
bounce out of that bed and get dressed so we'd go up to the  
mines.

(3)

She says: "Hal Morris, that's who he was" but she's been talking about Stratton ...

And he didn't give me no money. And I thought, "What in the name of god did I go out with that man all night for nothin'!"

He'd put a fifty dollar bill in my pocket-book, Now, he was an awfully nice fella. He used to come down. He said, "You're so ignorant that I just enjoy the company."

(Laughter)

Q: That was Stratton, Laura?

230'

Laura: Well, he ~~bought~~ the Brown Palace Hotel. He had a sweetheart at 18th and Lawrence. The cutest little thing you ever laid your eyes on. She run a house down there, you see. <sup>(inaud)</sup> He was up in the hotel that night with her when ~~(some)~~ <sup>she entered a</sup> knock. <sup>was</sup> ~~so,~~ I don't know what he intended to do with the girl, but come to find out she had a colored jockey out at the race track. That nearly broke him up. He said, "Arthur! Can you believe it?" That was Nichols, you see. "I can't believe it." And a wonderful little entertainer. My god, she could play the piano. She had a little baby grand in her bedroom, you know. Cut glass, silverware. ~~It~~ Just broke him all up. (chatter) But she was the cutest thing you'd ever want to see. And he was sick. She'd go out and blacken up her face, put on his jockey and ride the horse. But I don't know what ever ... 'Course I left Leadville then. But those were awful, ~~horrible,~~ <sup>ok, those were</sup> the days...

138'

Q: Did you know Baby Doe, Laura?

A: Naahh. Nobody paid any attention to her. You see, when Tabor'd come back there, the way he mistreated his first wife, people completely ignored him. But he had a wonderful personality. Big raw-boned.

Q: (woman) Did you know his first wife?

A: Oh, yes! I liked her. She was a big raw-boned Irish woman. She was even, when I left Leadville, still washing for the miners. She had a place up there -- I explained it to him (~~XXXXX~~) when he took the picture -- but I didn't know who I was explaining to. And I used to ride up there to see her. And I could do everything but write out a money order. Ladies'd come in, they'd want a little thread, and then they'd want gloves, so one day, man wanted a steak. Didn't have only just round steak up there. Well she was busy out there with her old wooden tubs, you know, with the handles and the soapsuds all runnin' over. And I liked a little bar, too. I liked to wait on the boys. So I cut the steak. I started that wide and I got half way and I run out of steak. *this fuck,*

(Laughter)  
155'

Well, they had the ~~(steak)~~ <sup>scales (and)</sup> an' old wooden paddles ~~-- round~~ <sup>she wanted</sup> a pound 'a butter. ~~And they~~ <sup>one that</sup> had the big bowl full of water and all. Why you could paper a room with the paper that you wrapped it in. And how, I could weigh a pound of butter. An' she come in "Oh, Laurrra, me darlin', you've ruined me leg!" I says, "What d'you mean, ruined your leg?" She says, "Look what you've done to me leg!" "Oh," I says, "That old round steak? That's all we have up here." Never saw nice stuff. Built right there at the foot of the hill. ~~(is)~~ <sup>it was</sup> ~~stiff~~ in a half hour. But I used to love to get behind the bar and I'd run out ~~xxxxxxx~~ and I'd say, "now put this in your ~~(is)~~ <sup>big</sup> pockets, you know." Uh, \* *Gynham apr* she was a wonderful woman. Very homely. Just a common, ordinary, hard-working woman. Everybody de-spised him. Now, they just despised him.

170'

Q: You say, Laura, that they didn't pay any attention to Baby Doe?

A: Oh, no! He never brought her up there.

(They discuss Baby Doe's brothers Phil and Pete McCourt, Phil's alcoholic girlfriend, who lived with Laura "Her breakfast was a half a pint of whiskey. They're both dead now." -- Laura asks Fred if he asked Lilly (Lil Powers) about Mattie Silks. Fred tells Laura about Forbes Parkhill's book on Mattie Silks -- humorous stories. Chatter.)

204'

Laura: Now I'm gonna tell you it was a pleasure to live in Leadville, those days. The millionaires associated with the poor common muckers. In the mines. You never hear of a mucker in a mine now. You'd go down there and there they were with their shovels. Picks. Had their ~~drills~~ <sup>drills</sup> ~~(?)~~ <sup>you could</sup> hear it at night. *burros*

*Put your thing  
in the  
middle, my god  
all together, it was*

210.

Q: You knew a lot of the old high graders, too, didn't you, Laura?

A: Um-hmm (chuckle) When you came out of the Johnny Mine -- when you went down you went into the room. You changed all your clothes. Then when you came upstairs, there was a guard watched ya put on your other clothes. ~~well~~, they had some ... they had heels, hollow heels. Some would maybe have a cavity in their mouths. Hi-gradin'. They got a lot of ore out of that Little Johnny Mine.

Q: They'd ~~take~~ <sup>take out</sup> it in their beards, too, I understand.

A: Oh, it was perfectly beautiful to go down in that mine. Those big pumps.

Q: That's in the Little Johnny? Uh-huh.

A: Well, the Maid of Erin, too. Their elevators, just the same as you go into these stores, that you had to wear a rubber overcoat and a hat because the water was still sifting from up around the top level. God, a million cubic feet a minute they had to pump out of there.

Q: Yep. Guess they're all filled up there now. All filled with water.

A: And you notice that brass on those engines. You could see your face in it. And they weren't the least bit, they were -- Oh! a speck of grease on it? But those engineers, ~~they got~~ <sup>were getting</sup> ~~ten~~ twenty-five dollars a day. The electricians, twenty dollars a day. The man that stood up on the top level and handled the ~~logs~~ <sup>logs</sup>, twenty-five dollars a day. And you know, money, <sup>it's</sup> you didn't know what poverty was. And everybody <sup>(inaud)</sup> come up and say "Give me five or ten" -- you knew you would get it back. Now, they try to argue with ya 'n say you didn't loan it to 'em. That's the truth.

\* Am. prof. well did?

246'

Q: Did you ever have any arguments with the boys, Laura?

A: Umhhh. And they had the paydays all arranged.

Q: Different paydays?

A: Different paydays for different mines.

Q: So the boys wouldn't all hit the saloons at the same time.

A: You oughta been up there when they had the Ice Palace.

Q: That was 1894 and it finally melted July 4, 1895.

A: And that was the longest winter they've ever experienced.

They had even a whole car (?) encased in ice. Everything was in blocks of ice. And it was built at the top like a castle. Did you ever see any of the pictures of it? Did anybody ever save any?

Q: Yuh. There are pictures of it. I've seen 'em.

A: Then they had a toboggin slide from the Vendome right up Ninth Street. Get in there -- and it was only six bits -- 'n instead of goin' all the way around, get off there at the Ice Palace. That was the toboggin slide.

(They ask her about someone she didn't know, who was there in 1911, named the Professor "and he could talk 7 Or 8 different languages.")

A: No, I don't know anything, I left, never knew anybody up there.

270'

Q: Fred, did you know the chap who discovered gold up there and finally he went through several fortunes and wound up by sprinkling water on the street for two bits every Wednesday, up there? To lay the dust? It was very dusty up there in the summertime.

A: Dusty?!? I don't know. I never thought dusty -- never knew when it was goin' to snow. Well, I'll tell you. It was, I guess, before they had the streets paved. Now you'd even drive down -- all the time I used to drive up there, I loved to drive down west Fifth Street. It's all gone down, now, you see. There's only one place left, and they took the second story off of it. Just looked like the pleasant days I spent up there, <sup>and</sup> why here you are, just like that. They don't take care of 'em. And then you go out Chestnut, why that's awful. They don't take care of Leadville at all. Then the old (?) bar (?) right to the right of the jail, that used to be a three-story building. Now look at it -- it's a train station.

Q: The post office is still there, isn't it?

Aww.

A: That's the new one.

Q: Well, that was there when I was there in 1912.

A: They made it that way out of town (?). Ahh. You go over to Leadville then and now, there was 30,000 (20,000?) people up there.

Q: Um-hm.

295'

A: But when that strike came, that killed it. I saw the young, the fire department (Myers, fighters, miners??), they set this mine on fire up on east Fourth Street. He went to connect the fire plug, they shot him down like a dog. And it never bothered them at all. And then they brought a lot of those little tin soldiers up there, from Fort Logan down here, now them things could only (hardly) lick a postage stamp. Now they didn't know how to fight them old tough miners, you <sup>was</sup> oh-ho-ho! They just pick (kick?) 'em up and spin 'em around up in the air.

Every saloon closed. Umm. We were all ordered out of town. (chatter) You couldn't walk up and down Harrison Avenue, 'twas so crowded all the time. (Now she is talking about the early boom days, not the strike)

(Fred and his friends start to ask her about Myers Ave. Was there one in Leadville, like in Cripple Creek. \*There it was a famous street for bawdy houses)

320'

Q: Do you remember a Myers Avenue in Leadville, Laura?

A: Old Samuel D. Nicholson, you know, he was our mayor. 'N when he was young, he liked the girls. And he'd come in, you know, and every new girl, now he had a great habit of pullin' her dress up and bitin' her, right here, on the leg. And you know, they didn't tell me to watch this gentleman. But he was skinny; not big like his dad.

Well, I had a beautiful voice, I used to sing. Wished I had the money it cost my father for cultivatin' but I did collect that note (?) (inaud) ain't that a joke. Well, anyway, I was singin' After the Ball and I always put a parody on it, you know, I never ... professor used to say, "Miss Laura: If you don't sing that song right, I won't play it" -- I said, "O, you don't have to." Well, he comes over and he bites me. Holy God I was bitten (how it stings? I was steamin', scre He bit me 'n I hauled off and hit the side of his face. in Oh my God, I blacked his eye, there. All right, I had to go to doctor Lahr (?) he let the Lahr rooming house up in Denver -- and have it cauterized. I was new, you know, I didn't know people. I sez "What kind a cutthroats you got to contend with up here? If that's the idea, Im gonna watch 'em."

345'

Well, the circus came into Leadville. Ringling Brothers' Circus. The first we ever had up there. 'Course everybody had to go. They had it there in the springtime. Well, Clara (?) and I went down, and there they had the chariot race you know, and it was so hard for the horses, the poor devils, they got all mixed up in the grandstands and everything else. So I looked, I said, "O, Clara, if I could just drive that team up Harrison Avenue. A white team! Aren't they beautiful?" I ~~ought~~ <sup>called</sup> a little peanut vendor ~~to~~ <sup>he</sup> I said, "Where can you get in communication with the fellows that have that chariot race here?" I slipped him a dollar, he says "I'll take you, lady." I says, "All right." He went back there 'n they was drinkin' beer out of a bucket. I says, "Fill it up again." He says, "Takes a dollar to fill that, I guess\*(~~inaud~~) 'n fills it." I says, "Tell you what I'll do. Give you five dollars if you let me drive that team up State Street, turn and go up Harrison Avenue and when we get to the Vendome, I'll give you the team." "Really, lady?" I says, "Why sure." "Can you drive?" "Well, I said, I don't s'pose I'll let 'em out of a walk." I said to Clara, "Go on. Their horses ain't they (~~inaud~~) <sup>beauties?</sup> Go on, now, give the other fella five dollars." And she did. (Laughter)

\* then goes to the room →

370'

They strapped you in around here, you know, and he says "Lady, I have to go with ya." Well, I took a few drinks of beer out of the bucket with him, you know. ~~well,~~

~~It was a hard crowd (?) they come near, honest to God~~  
~~(... took off?)~~

Don't be a piker. + you were stuck,

Holy God was I proud  
It was a hard crowd (?)



killin' people. Then I go up State Street, you know, and he <sup>rides</sup> behind me, I never coulda, well, there was four horses, you know. I don't know what ever possessed me. When I turned on State and Harrison, I BANG!! -- I hit that goin' -- Holy God! Horses broke loose from oh-ho-ho (general laughter from Fred et al) from the sidewalks. Kids run, I think we killed two or three dogs by the time we got 'em straight -- we was a pretty sight racin' up Harrison Avenue. We go up Ninth street, we went there on one wheel. I says, "Brother, stop 'em, you can have your pennies."

380'

Then we come down the street -- 'n the marshall -- here's where Nicholson comes in -- Marshall says "I'm gonna arrest you, Laura." I says, "What for? You want a little excitement, don't ya? Wasn't that a pretty sight?" "Yeap." Here comes Samuel D. down the street. He says, "Now what have you done, Laura?" "Oh" I said, "I drove that team, I think they hurt me." <sup>leader up to him</sup> And he says, "Marshall, forgive her, for she knows not what she do." (gen. laughter)

Q: But you scratched your leg, huh?

A: Yeah! \*(~~in~~) put in jail ~~and~~ well, I kept rubbin that and lookin' up at him -- If he had, I'd a showed it to ~~him~~. I showed that scar to the courts. My Lord. They didn't care what you did. But Lord God, we had an awful time. The horses a racin'. Jesus I didn't have the least ~~of~~ <sup>bein' able</sup> all I had to do was hold on to the chariot. (Laughter)

*Handwritten notes:*  
 \* I'd a scar <sup>from</sup> put in jail first.

401'

Q: How many years ago was that, Laura?

A: That was in '95. See, I was just up there from February ~~of~~ '95 until January ~~of~~ '96. I hated to leave Leadville.

(Fred tells her the story of how Leadville got its name)

410'

Q: Well, the story that I heard -- they were mining both gold and silver up there...

A: Wasn't Tabor supposed to have called it Leadville?

Q: No. The story that I heard was that those who were interested in gold wanted to call it Goldville, and the silver men wanted to call it Silverville. And they had a little shooting over it. And some tenderfoot spoke up: "If you want to name it after the mineral that there's the most of around here, you better call it Leadville." And the name stuck. Now that's the story that I heard. How true it is I don't know, but I never found anyone that would ever (inaud) ~~be~~ any other source.

*Handwritten note:* say it came from

423'

*mining man met you*

Laura: No, no matter where you went, ~~the man in the~~ ~~to see the~~  
~~XXXXXX~~ big bugs (big bucks?) "Hello there, c'mon in!  
 Let's have a drink." And uh, Charlie Cavender, the ter-  
 rible judge -- the banker's wife, Mrs. Hunter, was wild  
 about him. <sup>well, where</sup> ~~the~~ Charlie roomed up there, right, Fifth  
 Steet, upstairs, They had the bingo games. Now they used  
 to give the porter <sup>two</sup> bits to let us out the back  
 way. So I ~~tripped~~ <sup>tripped</sup> the limb of a tree next to my room.  
 And I had that old limb, I had a rope on it. Pull ~~it~~ and I'd  
 get on that limb and I'd go right down. I wasn't gonna give the  
 porter no two bits. But the rest of 'em ~~would pay to get out~~  
~~(inaud)~~. *were afraid to get out that window*

~~So~~, Old Charlie Cavender, he said "I've gotta go down  
 to Stringtown." He called up and said "Laura, will you go  
 with me and drive Old Broken-Tail Charlie?" I was the only  
 woman that could drive that horse. Well, Charlie Cavender  
 was a regular rent-paying student (??) And I said, "All right,  
 I'll be ready for you, Charlie." Well, goin' down, that horse  
 was afraid of a boxcar. Turned that sleigh over just that  
 quick. Well, here come a wagon up with a top <sup>over</sup> it and I guess  
 Charlie thought it was a boxcar and he upsets us. Well, you  
 bet your life I just took my hands <sup>out of</sup> the rein and I ~~just~~ left  
 Mr. Charlie go ~~and get~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~slung on the~~ <sup>side</sup> ~~horse~~. I looked up and  
 Charlie had knocked him out, in the snow, don't you see. We  
 were in the rocks. He says "Laura, do you know where the an-  
 imal went to?" "No," I said "He'll stop when he gets down  
 there somewhere." ~~Well~~ <sup>but</sup> let's go back and look for our cham-  
 pagne." We had four pints of champagne in there. We found  
 every one and Charlie went on down and just stopped the horse  
 dead. He'd get so drunk and you just have to take care of  
 him.

463'

*Don't tell me, I know* ←  
 So Mrs. Hunter happened to meet me on the street and she  
 used to use muck ~~(?)~~ for perfume. Jesus Christ you  
 could smell the woman a block away. Well, that was the  
 nigger perfume you know, down South. So I was goin' in the  
 bank one day and she looked out at me. "Huh!" she says.  
 "Young lady, I wish to inform you, I want you to leave Mr.  
 Cavender alone. "Well," I said, "you old grey-haired  
 bitch go on n tell him yourself. Don't tell me." And I  
 walked out of the bank. Well, used to be tough, those days *you know*.  
 (inaud) So I told Charlie and I got him to playin' bingo.  
 And I'd say, "Come on in and play a few games, anyway.  
 Be natural." He wanted to get turkey sandwiches, three-  
 cornered, you see, and play me cribbage and drink  
 champagne, and to put on one of his dressing gowns.

485'

"Now, Laura, I want you to be respectable." "Oh," I said, "That's too quiet, ~~young~~ Charlie, let's go out and play a little bingo." I had him so he was just followin' me around like an airedale pup. He'd come singin' "~~Maggie~~ <sup>Saggyards!</sup> The cows are in <sup>the quarter (?)</sup> And he never <sup>blows</sup> <sup>it</sup> <sup>bit</sup> ~~he'd~~ spend two or three hundred dollars, you know. He'd say, "I went to sleep, didn't I?" "Yep." And I'd raise the ante. He only owed twenty and I told him he owed sixty-five. Now this was the landlady's ~~share~~ <sup>leg</sup> <sup>it</sup> <sup>this</sup> <sup>was</sup> mine. They'd say "C'mon up to the house and I'll pay you, come to my office." They all lived in, they had their rooms in the rafters (?) you know, together. And you bet I never got mixed up with the landlady's money and mine, you see.

anything <sup>of</sup>

501'

Ed Smith came down one night, <sup>and</sup> they had quail on toast. Well, he was in love with one of the girls. So I took the quails' claws and made little bows with them and I tied them in his head. Well, he was so drunk he didn't know it and the next day when he woke up and the wife saw the quail claws <sup>with</sup> the pin and blue <sup>bedroom</sup> ~~bedroom~~ <sup>with</sup> them, she was ready to kill him. <sup>Oh</sup> He was gonna come down. ~~the~~ next day the (Bill) was \$800. They made millionaires down there. "How much is this girl worth? How much is that girl worth? I like her." <sup>then</sup> ~~and~~ he'd send one of his clerks down. Not with a check but with the money. He auctioned me off for 2 and-a-half. He said, "You lascivious bitch, you're only worth two-and-a-half." (gen. laughter) I said, "Is that the way you feel about it?" That was to his son-in-law and I said, "What am I gonna do with that monkey?" "Well, you're gonna entertain him like the rest of 'em ~~did~~" One girl got two hundred, hundred and seventy-five -- come down to me -- "Two dollars and fifty cents" He was married to Ed Smith's daughter. I said, "Boy, if I were to make life interesting for you." I did, too. \* (~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~) I said, "Two and-a-half? Where'd you get that? Two and-a-half?!?" "Now," he says, "I'll tell you Laura, that's all right, I'd ..." I got so damn mad about it I was ready to tell Ed Smith. He says, "Porter, watch me. That hellion's liable to kill me." I was ready, too, to beat him up. Crazy, oh-ho, but that's the way they'd come in, you see. Lock up the <sup>house,</sup> pay you for your time.

\* I never had too many brains?

530'

Q: Didn't they call that when they bought the key?  
 A: Well, pay you so much, you know -- you didn't dare let anybody in.  
 Q: Nobody else get in. They'd buy the key <sup>the house</sup> for the night, for the weekend.

552'

A: All we did was dance on the carpet. We didn't have any ballroom upstairs. 'N sing and drink.

Yes, I had opportunity to go to London. Roberts run a syndicate over in London and he was there lookin' over the mines, they <sup>were</sup> interested <sup>up there</sup> Mr. Roberts -- I called him The Bull, an elegant fella. He'd say "Come on, I've gotta go up 't the mine. At eight o'clock I'll be comin' down after you." Well, my god, if I knew what it meant, you know. So one day he didn't pay me. I'm still worryin' about that to this day. I forgot to ask for it, but he paid me plenty.

567'

Q: Laura, you told me once you were thinkin' about goin' over to the Orient. To China.

A: To china?? Oh, yes. When my lady friend got murdered.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, I was gon' to China. I would take a chance on anything. We had an inducement. Every six months they'd come back to the United States, take ~~XXXXXX~~ 200 girls with them -- well, these 2 girls just stood back. You shoulda seen their clothes, their money. And I said to Lola (lady livin' with me, ) "Hey, Lola, I'm not as good lookin' as you are, but I wonder if ~~the~~ man would take me." And she said, "Laura, you're so confounded ornery."

a Livingston ?

There was 200 of 'em in this house, this place. And she says, "I bet he would take ya." Well, I had my little lady friend there, Nora Kirk. She couldn't read, she couldn't write, but, I don't know, she was awfully attractive. So I said, "Nora, come on, let's go." Well, she had, Bob Allston run the Cottage Club in Denver, big gambling hall. Well, the man that Nora was in love with was his son-in-law. And Nora had to go -- she was really gonna get all fixed -- she had seven trunks. She had this Henry Hollins (Helms?) in Mountain Plains up in Cheyenne. That man was crazy about her. She had diamonds in her umbrella. Garter buckles. Slipper buckles. Why he just covered Nora with them. (She had to leave) he'd never leave Cheyenne. But that was just a little place of his in that hotel. Well, she says, "Won't you let me go and see Henry?" "Well, I guess you want to bid him good-bye, do you?" "Yes, I do."

And by god, he shot her and tried to kill himself. And so I'd waited and waited. I was all ready to go. Eight o'clock, we would go up to the Markham Hotel, that's where <sup>he satyed</sup>, then he was to take us up to Cheyenne, and ship us across. You never handled your own money. All the money you got was 'luck' money. They took care of everything. What pictures! Why they were out in those ricochets (rickshaws, she means) with the natives. Their parasols. And she ~~was~~ says "I hate to take whats-his-name" Cause she'd beat him

used to

633'

over the back with her parasol, he wouldn't run fast enough. She said, "I was afraid that native would throw us in the ocean." 'Round the capitol building. Hong Kong China.

'Bout half-past nine, the housekeeper called me and says, "I think a detective wants to see you." I says, "Well." He asks me if I know Nora Kirk. I said, "Why sure. I'm waitin' for her to go to Hong Kong China with me." Well he says, "I'm afraid she won't go. Will you go down to the morgue with me?" I said, "Why certainly." That's what they called them, the morgues, you know. And then there was Nora, laid out on the slab. Caught her right back here. But he didn't quite kill himself. So when we came out, I said, "Where are her diamonds?" She used to take 'em all off, you know, 'n wrap 'em in a small towel (and sew 'em in her muff? throw 'em in her house? throw 'em in her hook?) Those days you could demolish gold. She had a necklace ...

*in her handker*

TAPE RUNS OUT  
AT 660 feet.

LAURA EVANS TAPES -- Mazzulla Collection, Amon Carter Museum

Tape #4 cont'ed (2nd cassette) 5/4/51

Side One

000 (0.1ap on story of Nora's murder)

...But she used to take 'em all off and wrap 'em in a small towel and throw 'em in her hamper. Those days you could demolish gold. She had a necklace -- up here was twenty, if you mounted them right, you know -- any colored stone you wanted -- diamonds, rubies 'n whatever you wanted. And then they had the chaplain (?) bracelets. Why the way they used to demolish that gold, you know. She had that all around here and then a big twenty dollar gold piece here.

And I said, "Well, where's her stuff?" He says, "Will you go down to the room with me?" I says, "Yeah. I guess we'd better." I went over and there it was. You know nobody ever became of that ... they boarded her. And I used to correspond with her mother and I sent her decent clothes you know. I wouldn't send any evening dresses because poor old lady was very ignorant.

But whatever became of all that stuff -- her diamonds -- even in her umbrella handle! That old Hind (?) was crazy about her. Well, I never got to go to Hong Kong China. Look at here in Salida. Ella Brady and I came down here with the intention of going to Honolulu. You see, it's a good thing we didn't have automobiles, those days, cause we'd a got killed. They had enough runaways with horses and buggies.

But Brady was taken to Pueblo, kidnapped down there and kept 'n, well, I came down here and she stayed in Pueblo, twice. I liked her. We hadn't only seven thousand dollars between us when we came down from Leadville. And a beautiful wardrobe -- we had plenty of clothes -- we had everything we wanted. So this friend of hers gave her five hundred dollars to come to Pueblo and stay a week. He was crazy, and the family put him out in Werk's sanitarium, took her and put her out in a shanty and an old nigger to watch her. And she had a diamond ring that she cut a hole in the window and dropped a dollar out. Some kids come out there playin' -- she'd been there for six weeks -- and sent me a wire. Well, I went right down and I got her. She wouldn't come up to Salida, she stayed down -- that's when all the gambling houses -- and Spuddy Murphy was a big gambler down there, and interested, and he couldn't find Brady either. They called her Spuddy, like him. Now, I'd be cockeyed to even want to go. I don't even care to go to Cleola in Poncy Springs. That's only five-and-a-half miles!

(2)

021 Fred tells her the story of a local judge, held court on the second floor of one of the hotels. Punch line is: "The fine will be suspended, because the fines go to the school fund, but the costs, I cannot suspend, because the costs go to the court."

Fred asks her if she was ever up in Breckenridge. She says, "No, I only knew one woman up there. She had a house there and a coupla brothers run the saloon. They're all dead now." Over in Fairplay -- they have those Ghost towns.

Chit chat about Leadville and offering of cigarettes (Laura to Jo Mazzulla) L. refers to an 'atomic light' Fred gave her that she still has. Fred says Earl was the first man to show him one of those globes. More chitchat -- about bedspreads etc. Laura bumps into something "O, Christ almighty, I'm all mixed up here." Many voices continue, all pretty much off-mike. Fred tells Laura he doesn't want her to trip on something. L. inquires after Mrs. Carr. Fred says she's working for the State. They talk about a few other acquaintances

059

Laura: Gimlett! Did you give him that piece of pie that was out there? You better not. That man, my God I never saw such an appetite in my life! No wonder he's got to take shots in the hips, <sup>God but he?</sup> When he came back from Denver that time, my company was always hungry. We stopped at Fairplay. Had a breakfast steak, and oh, god almighty, I just had a waffle, and they made a mistake and brought me some ice cream, and he ate that all right. Well, we <sup>went</sup> up there to Fairplay and I just ordered a sandwich, 'n I didn't finish, and I declare if he didn't take the rest of my sandwich, and put it in his pocket! I said, "What are you, afraid you're not eatin' anymore?" He ate two big hamburger sandwiches, and I like 'em about cut with a safety razor blade, you know. (inaud) I laid it to one side 'n he took the potatoes. I looked around and I said, "For Christ's sake, what's he doin'?" Mrs. Priest said, "Well, he's takin' your sandwich with him." I says "Don't let the proprietor see that."

Chit chat -- Laura admires the Mazzulla bathroom. Jokes about not liking kitchens. Woman says "She likes bathrooms and bedrooms."

076

Laura: Well, In the first place, I don't understand (ever stay in ?) one. My years have been from the chair to the door. From the door back to the chair.

078

I don't know about a kitchen. (laughter) I had an awful time trying to learn which thing to flip on to make me a little cup of coffee.

Q: Laura, why do you have Theda Bara up there?

L: My favorite actress. Yeah. A Fool There Was. And I liked Marie Dressler. I never go to the shows. I don't like these frivolous new actresses. It's just like sittin' down to a meal that isn't properly seasoned. Give me the old timers. Theda Bara? Oh, she was the most beautiful woman on the stage. And was she a woman, too. You look at 'em now, it's like -- who's that one, I Don't Care, I Don't Care? Eva Tanguery (?) I saw her in Kansas City one time. She had her dress of one dollar bills. They had hoop skirts, you know. And then one-dollar bills, a thousand one-dollar bills. I read in the paper here she died in Hollywood absolutely a pauper. And so heavenly that she was afraid to have anybody to see her. Well, hell, the older you get, the uglier you get. Everybody does. It's only men please (improves?) with age.

Q: What men, Laura (wicked)

L: I don't know, I've seen men were disagreeable to look at, 'n after they get older, they fill out, they're like a block. They drop dead here in the hired room, he was awful lookin' when he was young. He turned out to be the prettiest face, white hair... playin' cards with a man at the table .

he dropped dead

(bg chitchat as the other women try to think who this might have been -- insurance man, etc.)

Fred: Frank Boyd still around?

Laura: I don't know, I guess he is here. I don't know what goes on uptown, and wasn't that too bad about Mrs. Frye (?), was it? The paper man's wife. You let 'em down here (inaud) and was a regular drunkard! The doctor told her that if she drank anymore, it would kill her. Somebody slipped her a drink. And wasn't she a wonderful little woman? My lord. Why, I was never so surprised when I heard it. You remember her? That's what killed her, was whiskey. Somebody slipped it to her.

he was a regular drunkard. →

(bg chitchat.)

106

Laura: You know, they condemn me for what I used to do here. My god, you go up town. One of them that was down here with a lady for me to go vote. I told 'em I wasn't goin' to vote. I don't give a damn if Salida has elections or not.



110'

And holy Christ, she ran away with another man, and us poor devils condemned for ... that's what makes me so confounded mad, you know. I don't hesitate to tell 'em what I think of 'em either. That's what they're like these days.

Fred starts to take pictures -- Laura yelps and complains that he's putting her eyes out (flash?)

121'

\*\* Sounds like they change the tape -- dead air and then a different, basier sound.

124'

Fred: Laura, you've collected a lot of things here.

Laura: People made fun of me with these hides. I think they're pretty, don't you?

Fred: They're very unique.

Laura: I went to one of Rex Beech's (?) plays there at the Elk Hall (??) and at one of these trading tents (?) And they had Navajos and all these things and I said "If ever I get the money, I'm gonna have me some, too." So I put 'em in the elevator (??) I like 'em. I think they look odd.

Oh, I made a new addition to the house. I went and sold the car and turned the garage over..... (chitchat about the room) I got 4 beds out there. I get forty dollars a month there (for it?). Yes, I fixed it up and (got) four railroaders. It looks nice. Cost enuff, it cost me seven hundred dollars to fix it. Say, don't it cost to build? I'm so glad I'm thru I don't know what to do. They call this Higrand Avenue. 'Eisn't Front Street anymore. Higrand (?) Avenue. The East End Railroaders Retreat. Out in the hall there, there's an I invented that myself. That's for the caller, you know that comes (chit chat) If I had more rooms, I'd have more men. But I've got 'em fixed up. They don't sleep on mattresses that size -- uh. How in the devil do you sleep in them twin beds? I fall out of em! Well that's the truth. (laughter, chit chat) I rolled out of 'em. I had to catch myself.

(Laura starts to talk with Fred about his new tape recorder.)

148'

Fred: Laura, when did Lil Powers live over in number one here?

Laura: 1913.

Fred: How long was she here?

Laura: She was here nine years with me. Number one across the street.

Fred: When did Dempsey have his fight with young Hector?

(5)

150'

F (cont'ed): was that 1910? or 11?

L: I think around 1916, it was. Yeah, it was during Prohibition then. Not fifteen, 'cause it was wet then. 1916 or 17.

I remember distinctly, there was a brewery down in Pueblo, sent me a barrel of beer. It was Prohibition days. All right. So I said to the Porter "The right hand is for the strangers." Well, I took in ninety-nine dollars that night and I was very much displeased I didn't take in the full hundred.

The next day this was a hospital. The prize fighters came down, you know (inaud) "Haven't we patronized you? Let us take the girls out." They took six of 'em out. You didn't know Big Liz Fisher, did ya? From Pueblo? Well, he come in here dashed, ribs broken. One girl with the pelvis bone broken, the other one with her ribs all caved in. Ooh! The just tore 'em to pieces! Cars, you know. And one man layin' in there. I had to call up Dr. Curfman. As luck would have it I did put a hot water bottle on him. That was in 1917. Will I ever forget it?

They were all dolled up, you know, and I put on a beautiful white silk suit. We wore big hats with anguilla (?) plumes on 'em. That's up here (pointing to a photo??)

165

This was the other fella's corner. Hector's. Dempsey was in that corner. Max Zeller (?) was the one that promoted him. And Zeller had chairs nailed on wood. Come down here 'n Jack says, "Jeez, ain't that a cute powder puff?" He called Hector a powder puff. Well he was. He had, oh, the most beautiful skin and a wonderful trademark. But he'd cold cream his entire body every night and powder himself. So he came over and he says to Max Zeller, "What's the receipts for the house?" Max says, "Four hundred." And he says "I'll give him just four rounds." And you know, old Hector got up there with that shadow boxing and Dempsey just (???) And around the corner there was a society lady was in love with Hector. "Well," Dempsey says, "I guess I'll have to put that powder puff in his lady friend's lap." Instead of puttin' him in her lap, he put him in mine! He SHOT him through those ropes. His nose, blood. Well, it knocked us all over. I was strong in those days, it nearly knocked the wind out of me. Chairs went over. Here comes Hector like a torpedo, through those ropes. I wish you could of seen my dress. I had to have it dyed black. Couldn't get the blood out of it. That was a night of nights here. That was in this house.

180'

Fred: Had he married Maxine then?

here

Laura: I don't know when he married her. He brought her <sup>here</sup> with him.

Fred: Did he bring her in here?

Laura: He didn't bring her here, but he put on an exhibition and he brought Maxine. And she was homely. D'ja ever see a homely woman, but so attractive and stylish? That was Maxine. And an awful habitual drunkard.

he

Fred: Well, where did <sup>he</sup> come over to get change (?) occasionally?

Laura: No. They'd watch and when the crowd came over to the house then they'd come over and they'd want change. Well, we didn't know what it was to dress like they have in recent years, you know, horsey (?) naked. Tricks and then run little things around here and a piece of gauze. (Coughing fit) Well, they'd come in, it was terrific. I stood there at the door and she had on a chiffon dress and not a thing underneath it. She was as naked as the day she was born. I walked in and I said "Say, girl, c'mere. Haven't you got any underclothes on?" She says "Nooh." Well, I said, "You just take your little body, you 'n Vera (?) and go on over to your home." I had to check her out. But, oh, she had a wonderful personality. Part Irish, you know (chit chat, laughter, can't hear) I liked her. I checked her out, she walked in the place, raised the window, the door, paralyzed drunk -- perfectly nude, lying there on her bed all stretched out. But then he was never around here with her. Now don't give that poor man credit for that, because he wasn't. He never was. But you see, after he left here, he went to Salt Lake, then he began to get into prominence. He didn't want that poor, funny lookin' thing, did he? He met such beautiful women, I presume, what'd he care about her, poor old devil? But she burnt up in New Mexico somewhere, wasn't it?

Fred: In Juarez

Laura: Yeah. In her hotel. (someone says "cigarettes") Well, I'm not surprised. But when they said in the paper, and referred to her -- 'so-and-so here in Salida' -- that she was the means of his livelihood -- Jack Fisher "Mutt & Jeff", is he still alive?

Fred: I think so.

Laura: I declare. He came up one time -- that was in the old house. And I said "What about this report about Jack Dempsey? I wish you'd please correct that. That man never did live off of a woman's earnings."

212

"Well," he says, "Maybe I will, maybe I won't." I says, "I don't care what you do, whether you do or not, but there's no use of accusing him of something when the man is innocent."

And Jack never drank. He never smoked. And that night after the fight, he didn't come down with the boys, he stopped up at the <sup>place</sup> and he never even came near the place. He was a pretty tough hombre, *when he was a kid.*

218

And he was raised mostly over here in Victor. And probably Lilly (Powers?) can tell you about him over to Victor when he was a young boy. Took a delight in breakin' up their little playhouses over there. Breakin' in windows and kickin' doors and (naud) they couldn't whup him.

Like the last time he was here, uh, Fisher came up to see me and that chap that's down in Pueblo, what's his name, Cook? Head of the telegraph office?

Fred: I don't know him, Laura.

Laura: Well, he's a wonderful fella. Fisher and this other fella and his wife came down to see me. Says they've got Jack up here, corralled, autographing in Soubry's (??)

That's all right. But he says, "I'm gonna bring him down after awhile." "No," I said, "don't you do it. You know he's havin' trouble with his divorce, <sup>you see</sup> and he's gotta be careful (i.e. coming into a whorehouse). Well, I didn't want to hurt him any, did I. Well that night, you oughta seen Front Street. You'd a thought 'twas a funeral. Comin' up t' the house: "Oh, Miss Laura, if Dempsey comes up, won't you let us in? Won't you do this, won't you ..." I said, "Yes, if he comes I'll do it."

Some man was up here from , (?town's name?)

232

I said, "I'll tell ya. I'll show you what braves and wrestlers and prize fighters are. Why don't you go on down, you've gotta be in Pueblo tomorrow to referee this man, why don't you all go down and have a fake holdup? <sup>stop it</sup> Put a big board across there and put some lanterns on so he won't break his leg. Then shoot up: 'It's a holdup!' See how brave they are." There wasn't a one of 'em would do it.

238

Now, well, that would have been something, wouldn't it? And then I said, "Have wings on ya." But they wouldn't do it, and so he never came, well I didn't care much whether he did or not.

Jack Fisher died, too. That was one of the big promoters of your Gerrick and Rerman Hind (???) And theirs was nothing but a railroader. But Jack had higher ambitions, and God I hated to hear of that. Died of heart trouble.

I thought "When the hell'd you ever have a heart that was big enough to stop on you?"

248

\*\*They talk about a parade uptown for two guys back from Korea. She says "Well, I'd be a nervous wreck. I can't go to bed until two o'clock in the morning. I'd be a good sentinel."

*5. was up out of the house, I'm just so confounded they're so disgusted, I don't know what to do. Election day. Application in to get a new place.*

They oughta send me to Korea, I'd make a good sentinel. I could walk up & down half the night and never go to sleep. But it's an awful strain"

Q: But you don't have to get up early?

L: What for, to go crazy? No, I keep the old hours -- Noon. When I wake up about ten o'clock in the morning, I'm frightened to death. Walk up and down the hall, look across the street. No. It's a true story: 'You'll never miss the water 'til the well runs dry.'

They chit chat about her rolling cigarettes.

Fred talks about someone -- heart attack -- lazy, more likely, says he was "too well spread and under-screwed."

277' Q: Laura, what is the dollar you've got framed up there?

L: That can explain my former occupation, when I turned it into a rooming house. Well, people were afraid it would rub off on the doorsill and maybe the walls. So, one of the railroad men brought a conductor in and he rented a room for one night. That's the first dollar I took in, and I put it on cork in there and I decided I'd just keep that. In January 1950. I've got it framed up there, my first dollar. But I didn't take in any more till April -- January to April.

288'

When I was a young girl there at the Seminary, I used to go to the \_\_\_\_\_ and they tried to make a Catholic out of me. I said, "Nope. I don't believe in your confession. What do we young girls do to confess? (something about the Don and the name of the place: down there in Missouri where Dr. Curfman came from -- beautiful place)

So, they called in the Don. He said, "I'll tell you what you do: put a little rock in your slipper, put a rubber around -- something to cause you a little pain. Because, when you first die, you enter Purgatory. Fine. Then, after you're there such a length of time, you enter the Gates of Heaven." And I said "Yessir." (?) I did: from January 26th to April 25th there wasn't a damn \_\_\_\_\_ in Hell. But I suffered here, I released 'em all, didn't I? There wasn't a soul in Purgatory, I'll tell you that, suffered the way I suffered. Ya, I released 'em all.

328' (?) ftg. counter went out.

Fred asks her to tell the story of the bustle she wore in Leadville to smuggle the \$25,000. in

Laura: It was in 1895. Yup. The Maid of Erin Mine.

That was when they had the first strike up in Leadville.

There were 500 women up there. \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of curiosity -- State, Pine, Chestnut, West Hill. And that was D.H. Moffat & *Smith*, \_\_\_\_\_ They owned

the five properties: The Maid of Erin, The Wolf Tone, the Bon Air (??) . . . and two others. They had it all guarded. Scott was armed. It was terrible. It was nothing to walk in the street 'n see somebody lyin' in the alley. You didn't even know if their throat was cut, whether they were dead. But they didn't let the places stay open -- they closed all the saloons. So this friend of mine, there was a man that was 40 years old (??) They had to have a certain amount of money up there. They even had a code in the telephone office. They had spies in the telephone office. All the big bugs, left Leadville, you see? Cause they were afraid. It was nothing, my god, for sixty dollars they'd murder their mothers if they thought they'd done anything!

So Nick said, "We've got to get a parcel (??) up to the Maid (of Erin)" I said "Who are 'we'?" And he said "Mr. Moffat -- (he just worshipped Mr. Moffat) and Ed Smith." And I said, "Yeah, well, why don'tcha take it up?" He said, "We don't dare."

Well, you see Ma Tabor, right at the foot of the Maid of Erin Hill had her store up there. 'N I just worshipped her. She'd say, "Oh, Laurry, wouldn't she make a wonderful wife for a man?" And I'd say "Oh good God, no. I just got rid of one!" I said, "Give me the stuff. I'll take it up." I had a pinto pony, you know. I'd just go ride on horseback into a saloon, get a drink, go down, swim across the river, 'n go on out. I never cared to drink when I was young -- get out and race with her. So I said, "Is it a very large bundle?" They said "It can be reduced." See it was in thousand dollar bills. Five hundreds. Two hundreds. You never see a two hundred dollar bill anymore, do you? Two hundred dollar bills. One hundred dollars, twentys, tens and fives. No one dollar bills. I said, "Gimme that stuff. I'll take it for you." Well, it was a package about that size, 'bout that high. And I just toted it in my bustle. You know they used to have these cotton tits and paper rear ends...

Tape ends. Cont'd on Side 2

LAURA EVANS TAPES -- Mazzulla Collection, Amon Carter Museum

Tape #4 cont'd (2nd cassette) 5/4/51  
Side two

000

0.laps back to, 'You never see a two hundred dollar bill etc.'  
through 'cotton tits and paper rear ends.'

004

And I had a heavy corduroy riding skirt, you know, a double .  
skirt-- a voluminous thing. Well, Holy Moly, I got up there  
with it, you bet your life I did. Nobody ever suspicioned  
because so many of the boys would leave their jobs, "Oh,  
Laura, what're ya gonna do?" "Oh, I'll go on up 'n see  
Nick. I'm makin' fifty bucks" You see, 'n I was a  
regular old mother to'em all. Well, I was only about 19.  
Well, they said, "Tell you what we're gonna do with ya.  
If they hurt you up there, we'll dynamite this whole hill."  
And you oughta seen me. I got my bustle, that's all they  
wanted. Then when I came down, didn't I start to celebrate?  
I was so nervous, you know how you've ever done anything  
and then relaxing?

011'

And that night at nine o'clock I was on a train going to  
Denver. And I met Mr. Moffat the next day. I tell you,  
that was a millionaire house. As you entered the door,  
it's up on Grand (St) up on the corner -- it's a filling  
station, I think now. As you entered the front door, it  
had the marble steps and the iron bannisters. There was a  
naked woman there in marble, foot of the stairs, with a pair  
of electric lights in her hands. Now Mr. Moffat's office  
was on that side. Nick says, "Just go in there." Well,  
you know, being a landlady, seeing grass and flowers;  
up in Leadville you never seen a blade of anything like that.  
I looked all around and I wanted a cigarette, but those  
days if you were smokin' cigarettes they had to do  
somethin' (??)

018'

I looked in and there was a little lady sittin' there -- I  
don't know if she was crocheting or what she was doin'. She  
had big white handkerchief. "Well, Joseph, what do you think  
of the place?" I was supposed to be a stenographer,  
and I didn't know what a typewriter was those days!!  
Well, anyway, I think he read that in a dime novel, about the  
typewriter. Well, I said "I've been in many places..."  
Across at furniture, the backs of the chairs, oh, I tell  
you I was lookin'. She said, "Come back here." Well, they  
had the saloon parlour full of little doors. And, "Oh,"  
I said, "This is wonderful." "Now," she says, "I'm  
going to take you to my diningroom" One side was all cut  
glass, and the other side was silverware. Give those banquets

(2)

all in silver. She said, "Now, would you like to see my kitchen?" I said, "No ma'am, I don't know anything about kitchens." And she says, "The beauty of it is, I cook for my husband." And I thought, "You're pretty lucky."

026'

Moffat committed suicide. He was at the First National Bank. I was at the Albany Hotel. And the bricks that he bought were wrapped in tissue paper. They were perforated. And they had a guard there watch him on the street so people wouldn't steal a brick for a souvenir. You know where the First National is? Well, here comes Mr. Moffat out and he left a little heroin that would get, they would roll it out. Well anyway he shook hands with me. And he says to Nick, "I'm awfully proud to meet the young lady." He put a bill in my hand. Well, I wanted to peek down and see what that bill looked like, but I didn't want him (Nick?) to know I had anything either. dare and I didn't He might want to borrow it. But he had plenty of money. And I was afraid to put it in my pocketbook, cause if I did I'd a pulled out a cigarette, you see, nervous I wanted a cigarette (??) Well, he called it 'horse and buggy days' you know.. I said, "Nick, I've gotta sit on the floor. I've got to have a cigarette." He smoked cigars all the time. You bet I put this in there, 'n I always carried extra handkerchiefs. I wrapped it around and when I got back to the hotel -- a hundred dollar bill was in it.

Q: That was a lot of money in those days.

L: A hundred dollar bill for takin' that money up there. Now there was no danger in me goin' up there. Those men all liked me so well and it was all fixed for me to come up, you see. I wasn't a bit afraid.

039'

Q: Up in Cripple Creek, did you ever know French Blanche?

L: I didn't know anybody in Cripple Creek. I was a respectable married lady then. But I knew enough to go to Albert & Burns Saloon and get a dollar an hour dealing stud poker. Evans couldn't get me back! One of the bartenders roomed down at the hotel and me and Maude (?) went up there. She says, "Come on Evans, go in with me." And I says, "What? Doin' what?" She says, "We'll open up a restaurant." And I says, "I don't know anything about a restaurant." She says, "All you've got to do is sit there and take in the cash." She was an old thief, she made ten thousand dollars in one year.

That's the first time I ever saw a burro (?)

(inaud) and old tin buckets that you put the red liquor (?) and put it over the side so that you could look into it. That was a 'lectric light. I fell over this burro (?) My goodness! Put did I fall in to the waist. But I used to go down. Wonderful. And they'd the worst hotel. All the privacy you had -- ropes across blankets. You had to know where your bed was, pull a blanket and go get in your bed.



(3)

051'

(inaud) in two weeks. I was goin' to away and go back again. Just think: dealin' cards up there eight hours, eight dollars a day. That was big money.

Fred asks her about old wash basins in the hotels -- tin, china, on a commode. Laura doesn't recall.

060'

Laura: I was over to the National when Jim Flinn fought. I think he fought in 1914 or 15. He stopped at the hotel. We were so busy drinkin' outta soady water bottles, but it wasn't soady water. Now the terrible Turk that had charge of Flinn was with Dempsey. He's an old man now. 'N he said, "Well, what are you doin' with Flinn, Laura." I said, "Treatin' him like a mother." Drinkin' cocktails out of a black soady water bottle -- that wasn't soady water. I was drinkin' vermouth cocktails in mine. You outta seen that night over there. Oh, what a wild night that was, his fight. They were in a pit in Victor. Flinn was so drunk that the other party had to just push him away. But he got the decision. They made him a present of a red automobile that had his name on the side of it. He said, "C'mon Evans, I'm gonna take you over." That was in the afternoon. I went out in it, but I didn't come back with him. Had the old street cars, get on a street car and c'mon down Cripple Creek, they had Myers Avenue. Uh-uh. I said, "Let me out. The kidneys need emptying." I didn't change my underwear; I didn't have to, but I got out of that car. Oh. The way he drove, and that was dangerous. D'ja ever drive Cripple Creek to Victor? Uhh. They boomed that town that night. Poor Jim, he died a pauper, out in Tucson, Arizona.

076'

Those days they had the old County Poorhouses, not like they have now, and the old age pension, you see. And he died out there. I liked old Flinn. He was tricky, out cuttin' (?) I'll tell you right now, you had to watch him all the time. He had a nice little picking way with him. Better not lay your pocket book down or anything or he'd put you on the separator in a very little while! Tell ya that. But then, we were all young, what'd we care?

You know, you sit and you look back and you think, you know. An this is still a punishment for me, I'll tell you that, it was over then. I like excitement you know. I like company. What have I got? I read them hit & run, biff-bangs, you know, the westerns. Lucille says, I've got a library, why don't you select some of my books? I say, take your old books. I'll take somethin' teach me how to hold a gun

085'

I used to be crazy about firearms, anyway. I'd go have target practice, you know. That teaches you something, don't you think? Y'ain't afraid to pull a trigger. You bet your life you're not

Q: Laura, whatever became of Vivian?

L: Oh, she died out in Butte, Montana. She came through here with a husband, or I don't know who he was, with a car full of whiskey. She peddled it all in Salida, Jeezus, Vivian was so drunk. Oh, she was the handsomest young girl you ever laid your eyes upon. The most magnificent eyes, remember?

Q: I remember her back as far as 1913.

L: In number eight. Beautiful.

Q: She was up there in Montana with Lil?

L: They went up there and opened up a roadhouse, they called 'em. Cabins or something. I like to hear from the old girls, you know. Well, it's just like we're all so old and homely and good-for-nothin' that we're too lazy to write. That's the truth.

Q: Remember Rose, that came here from San Francisco?

L: There was two girls, Rose and Pearl.

Q: Italian girl.

L: Ooh. You mean Rosie Costello. She was from Las Vegas, Nevada.

Q: But she used to come over to the post office every Monday and buy a money order payable to the Bank of Italy in San Francisco.

L: That was to her sweetheart, he was buying a grape farm. And then she went out after he got everything he wanted, 'n paid for and she went over here to Greenberg's they had a roller to polish the floors, carpets, floor lamps. He fell in love with another one, and they wouldn't let her come in the front gate.

106'

Poor Little Rosie, she was almost crazy. Well then she came back again and she picked up with another fella and she put him up in business in Las Vegas, yes, that's before they built that dam up there. And then she bought him a big car, forget what the name of it was, and left town. He fell in love with a blonde. And the last time I heard of Rosie, she had a cancer on her breast, and all she got out of it was a little home which she bought out there in Las Vegas.

112'

You see they closed me in '26. Somebody told her that I had everything of her's here, right next door. But the reason why, I wrote and told her I didn't want her back, which was the truth. And she got as far as Salt Lake -- didn't have no long distance phones those days. So she wrote me a letter, and I had Eva, I asked her to pack her stuff and send it to her. Then she went to

out there in Utah somewhere. Thn that cancer, whether it killed her or not, I don't know. She was a cute little trick, wasn't she?

118'

Q: But she used to come to the post office every Monday morning, sent the money order.

L: Yes, she sent him every-thing. He was just incurable, he and his mother, don't you see. That'll show you how women used to be.

Q: Any of 'em ever save any money, Laura?

L: Verrry few of 'em. There was very few, but in case of emergency, they was prepared. Now you take old Lil (Powers) down there, she was always a very conservative woman. Poor old devil never had any sportin' blood in her. Crazy for the mighty dollar. Now look at her. She's got her home. I told her the other day, I said, Put the thing up. Sacrifice it. I wouldn't live down here like this! What have you got? If you do put a neon sign out there: Rooms. You got four little chicken shit rooms here.

And she's so neat. When I walked in last Sunday, there she was -- scrubbing. I said, What are you scrubbing for? She says, Come on back. I said, Where you takin' me to? She says, The kitchen. Oh, I said, the place I love the best! Whatsamatter, don't you use the room anymore? Oh, yes. Well her was around the room, you could eat soup out of it. Were you in there?

Q: Uh huh.

L: Did ya see it? Well, it's a good thing I carry this crap (Indicates her cigarette-rolling stuff) around with me. Just made it and I put my ashes in there. I hate to be around anybody like that, afraid to get a -- cause I'm liable to flip a cigarette anywhere.

I stayed about twenty minutes. Pat, one of the girls drove me down. Says, We're goin' over to get a glass of beer and a sandwich. Now, I says, don't be gone long.

The whole world knows I won't sit here (?)

(Inaud) And she's lookin' good. She's straightened up now. She told me you were through. (came by) The woman that she rented her house to, went up town and rented a place -- didn't say a word to her. Not a word. And a good citizen like Lilly. My land, honorable, upright. She owes you a nickel, you're gonna have it. Lil's well fixed. She's got plenty. She says, My home. And I said, I'd set fire to the damn thing. Wouldn't you? I'd get out of it. I feel like I'd burn this here, but I haven't got enough insurance on it.

Fred asks her about Grace Shaffer. Laura says she's working at the Good Samaritain over in Denver. Good little nurse. Laura talks to Jo Mazzulla about what brand she smokes. Fred asks how long Grace was with

Laura. Laura answers, About three years.

160'

Laura: This Evans, this head man at the tramway. You've heard of him, haven't you? Well, he had a nephew, that, who dealt with women, don't you see? And they put him this place, that place and the other. If he got into trouble, why this Mr. Evans would get him out of it. So he sent Grace up here. Well, I wouldn't put up with any foolishness like that, you know. But he left her.

167'

Q: In the old days at Leadville, how much could a girl make in a week?

L: In a week? You mean, in a night. If she didn't average 75 or 80, it meant she didn't have a nice taking way with her. Separatin' those miners, maybe seventy-five to eighty. Maybe a hundred dollars. It was the prettiest sight to go down on State Street. That's where I learned everything, up there. I was as green as grass. But I was a very apt scholar, you see. You go down and there was a hundred women on the floor in the dance hall, dressed up the same as in the big parlour houses on Market Street. Daytime, then at night -- fifty day, fifty night. My god, and you bet your life when you went in that ball room you didn't dare throw beer or anything on the floor. They paid fifty cents for a dance. If the girl didn't drink, she got her fifty cents. But if she took a drink and the man took a drink, she only got two bits. You oughta been up to Leadville those days, Katie bar the door! I'll tell you. I've sttod right next to old Jim Brown, the Unsinkable Mrs. Brown's husband, old J.J. Nothin' to lose three thousand, thirty-five hundred playin' Fairbanks (?) That's what they liked in there, Fairbanks (?)

Q: That's when he had the Little Johnny?

L: No, he didn't have the Little Johnny at that time. He was nothing but an ore-hauler. What was that Daly outfit in Denver -- old Tom Daly? How he did hate me. Well, I'm trying to think of a millionaire that owned the Johnny Mine. Tom Daly married his sister. Can't you think of the man? You didn't know...

(They pass various named back and forth -- can't think of the guy.)

193'

Q: Bernie Reed was up in Leadville, too, wasn't he?

L: Oh god, he was a wonderful little fella. Then Tom Daly got up into prominence. All Right. Then the Unsinkable Mrs. Brown, she got connected some way. That promoted Mr. J.J. Brown. And my, he just went crazy when they struck it up there. They struck it down near Lease, I think. You oughta seen his house. Nick used to take

(7)

me everywhere, you know. Downstairs was elegant, basement was elegant. But, Katie bar the door, go upstairs -- yow, they had no carpets on the floor. Them beautiful big reticences (?) oh, they were magnificent. And he had his little old -- and his wife wouldn't let him -- had pipes all around the place. Didn't have the cigarettes -- had cuspidors those days.

204'

And he had his safe right under his window. So he owed Nicholas some money. And he said, Well, Laura, you gonna go uptown now and tell where I'm gettin' this money? I said, What do I care about ya? And the safe was built in. They all had magnificent -- it was bricks, you know. And Jim got in there and he opened up the safe. I wish you could have seen the gold stacked in there. Currency with bands around 'em, papers. Well, I said, why don't you put that in the bank? He said, I don't trust any banks.

Well we were all down at Tratoon's (?) one time, and he got to arguin' about what's the gold buy and I didn't have time to listen to that foolishness, you know. They had the orchestra there and the dancin' 'n... Well, I said, Jim, I'll tell ya, to prove it to me when you die, old dear, come and see me. He died and I've never seen him.

215'

Yeah. Then Mrs. Brown, you've heard a her. I wish you could of seen up at Leadville. She never knew what it was to only wear a calico dress. And then Cooper's sister married Tom Daly, oh, I can't think of this man's name! and he set him up in the insurance business. Well everyone had to insure with Daly, and they got so high powered, they had to leave, go down to Denver. Millionaires never stayed up in Leadville. You ever go up there?

222'

\*\* Q: Danny Sullivan's story about one of Daly's scams: bookkeeping business for the mines where he would keep a 10% 'commission' on deductions from payrolls etc.

Fred: He would keep books and handle the payrolls for some of the mines, and that he would collect a 10% commission on deductions. In other words, boardin' houses, saloons, and even the girls, where they'd run a charge account, he would deduct it from the check and charge a 10% commission for holding it out of the miners' checks. Danny says Daly made a lot of money on that.

Laura: That was similar to what Nicholas had. His salary was five hundred dollars a month. In those days you could buy a pair of shoes for three and a half, would cost you 18 or 19 now. And then he got 10% for collecting from all the boarding houses, you know.

234'

Chit-chat -- someone prepares to leave (a man) who says  
This lady can tell you lots of stories.

Laura: D'jyou say 'lady?'

Man: Yeah.

Laura: Umph. I don't wanna be one

Fred starts to take pictures of everyone. Try to get Lucille,  
who laughs and protests.

Laura: Better shade your eyes -- you'll be blind from  
that blue light (the flash). You go waste more good film  
(to Fred) Jesus Christ, is he comin' my way?

Lots of chatter as photos are taken. Laura chides him about  
how many 'globes' (flashes) he uses and buys. Fred says  
he buys six cases at a time and there are 120 in each case.

Fred: What's the date today, Laura, the 4th of May?

Laura: I don't know.

Fred: Yeah, this is Friday, May the 4th, 1951 -- I gotta  
flop this thing over (meaning the tape) See this tape  
records on one side, then you turn it over and put another  
recording on the other side. And while I'm taking Frank  
Gimlett home, will you tell Mr. Parkhill about the early  
Leadville days? More than you have been telling?

Laura: Sure

Fred: And he might have some questions

Laura: Make any difference what I talk about, before the  
ladies?

Fred signs off to turn the tape over.

Tape ends at 258'  
End of Tape #4