

● *Helga Estby*

In order to truly celebrate the raising up of women's voices through the ballot box, we need to understand the realities of the silencing of women's voices and experience in our history. Here is one woman's story, with thanks to Linda Lawrence Hunt (see her book, *Bold Spirit*).

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I'll never forget the first time I saw her
She and her daughter just outside Spokane
In her high button shoes, a gun on her shoulder
Settin' off on a wager to walk across the land

Helga and her husband were hard workin' farmers
But the year of 1896 had brought them to their knees
For Ole had been crippled, Helga's health was fading
If they didn't pay their taxes soon the farm would be seized

Then Helga had an offer from secret New York sponsors
To earn ten thousand dollars to walk across the land
So one clear May morning, with winter frost still forming
They set off on the railroad track East of Spokane

We are all on a journey, and who can know the end?
It's hidden in the promises, scattered by the wind
But she walked across this country, It was all that she could do
Helga Estby of Spokane, we will remember you

Near the end of the journey, Clara sprained her ankle
But they made it to New York on a cold December day
The sponsors were sorry, but they never paid a penny
They'd walked four thousand miles, but they got there three days late

In May they returned to a heart-broken family
Two children they'd buried, the farm would be lost
In their grief and anger, they hid the walk in silence
Too bitter the memory, too high was the cost

Many years later in nineteen and twenty
In a small Spokane attic, Helga sorted her notes
She'd locked the door tightly, but her mind still could journey
She picked up her pen and she secretly wrote

And the years fell away. She wrote of the people.
The beauty of the desert with Clara by her side
But when she died, her daughter burned every paper
But her memory was stronger, her story survived. CHORUS