

Edith Arnold Interview
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Local 653 Union Hall
Pontiac, Michigan
Transcribed by Daniel Clark

DC: . . . [testing microphone] Just say something

EA: Like I'm not used to this? [laughs]

DC: That's good! That'll work. [turns off tape recorder] . . . It's moving. This is good.

EA: Now watch me go blank and clam up and [laughs]

DC: Oh, whatever . . .

EA: . . . can't think of anything.

DC: I doubt that will happen, but I really start out with basic questions, like where were you born?

EA: My birth—OK—Oswego, Illinois.

DC: Where in Illinois?

EA: Oswego.

DC: Oswego. Where is Oswego?

EA: Just outside of Aurora, which is only about thirty miles from Chicago.

DC: Oh, OK. All right.

EA: West of Chicago.

DC: I hadn't heard of Oswego. Um . . .

EA: Well, it's only this big [not very]. Aurora's this big. This is *this* big. [laughs]

DC: [laughs] A little smaller than Chicago anyway.

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: Yes.

DC: Had your family been in Oswego for long?

EA: Forever, yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: My Dad, he was a farmer. And a good one.

DC: And where did your mother and father meet?

EA: Oh, I think at a party, because as I remember, Daddy kissed Mama on the cheek and she slapped him. [laughs]

DC: Oooh.

EA: So that's what I know about that. [laughs]

DC: Were they both from Oswego?

EA: Um, around there—I don't know—the farms around there. It was probably called [Newassee?] at that time, which is an Indian name.

DC: OK, farms in the area, anyway.

EA: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. You said you just turned 87, so . . .

EA: I did, yeah.

DC: . . . you were born in 1916, it sounds like.

EA: Yep.

DC: OK.

EA: Got your math right!

DC: Checking my math here, right. [laughs]

EA: [laughs]

DC: UM, you said your, your Dad was a farmer. What all did they grow on the farm?

EA: It was a dairy—cattle and dairy and hogs.

DC: And had that farm been in the family before, before him?

EA: Um [short pause] I don't think so.

DC: OK. All right. So dairy cattle and hogs. Um, what do you remember about growing up in Oswego? What do you remember about growing up there?

EA: Oh, I was a happy kid. I was the youngest of eight kids Mama raised. She had four, and I was the youngest. And four died when they were babies.

DC: Oh really.

EA: Three boys and one girl. So I had five sisters and two brothers—and the women are the tough ones.

DC: OK.

EA: [laughs]

DC: They survived, huh?

EA: Yeah, we were healthier.

DC: Yeah.

EA: Outdoor living.

DC: So four died very young then.

EA: Yeah, babies, like three months.

DC: Oh boy.

EA: Food didn't agree with them, and stuff like that.

DC: Oh, sorry. That must have been very difficult.

EA: They didn't know what to do. And the story went that—that don't have to be in there—but the story went that my mother wanted a baby girl with blonde curly hair and blue eyes. And it took twelve kids to get that combination [laughs]. After me, she quit.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: I was the one [laughs]!

DC: So you were the baby girl with blonde hair and blue eyes.

EA: That's right. [laughing]

DC: OK. Wow.

EA: [referring to siblings] If the hair was blonde, it was straight. If it was blonde, curly hair it was green eyes, or brown eyes [laughs].

DC: So she kept going until she had the right combination.

EA: Yeah.

DC: So in all there were twelve children, but four died early on.

EA: [very quietly] Uh hum.

DC: So eight, eight lived. And you were the youngest of those.

EA: Yup. And I hated being called the baby of the family. Now I love it! [laughs]

DC: Yeah, there is a certain time when that changes, right?

EA: [laughs] Yup.

DC: OK. So did you and your siblings help out on the farm?

EA: Oh, we all had our chores to do, yeah. No question.

DC: What sorts of chores did you have?

EA: Well I had to help—my sister and I had to bring in the cobs, and the wood for the cook stove. We had to go out and fight hens for the eggs that they laid. Some of them didn't want to give them up. And I didn't like being pecked on the hand. My sister would grab in there and grab it, but I gingerly would get in there, and I'd get pecked on the hands. I'd get a board and hold her hand up against the side—these little cubby holes that they're in—so she couldn't peck me! [laughs] Steal her egg away.

DC: How old were you when you started to do those sorts of things?

EA: Oh, probably ten—eight, ten, around in there.

DC: Yeah. So did you have a garden as well?

EA: Oh, sure.

DC: Did you work in that?

EA: We lived off of that. [in response to question about working] Yeah, pretty much all of them did. I knew the vegetables from the weeds. [laughs]

DC: That's helpful when you're weeding!

EA: Had an orchard.

DC: OK.

EA: Yeah, we had our apples and pears, and I remember one time there were plum trees. They died out when I was young, though. Oh they were good.

DC: They died out?

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: That must have been disappointing.

EA: Yeah—as long as apples and pears.

DC: So would you can the fruit then?

EA: Oh yeah, yeah.

DC: Was that your Mother's job?

EA: We all helped.

DC: You all helped with that, OK.

EA: The canning itself I don't think I ever did—because of the older ones, you know. Had my job of doing dishes every day, and bringing in the cobs and the wood.

DC: The cobs and the wood. OK.

EA: My sister and I would bring in—my mother would say, “That's a lazy man's job!” And I couldn't understand why we worked so hard—we'd each get—the wood that would be chopped up, the sticks would be like this—and we'd hang onto this, and then the other one would load his arms up.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: I mean we'd get like three loads of wood all in one trip.

- DC: So you'd have your arms like this [curled in front] in a big circle? OK, yeah.
- EA: Pickers and slivers in our arms.
- DC: And she called that lazy man's work?
- EA: Yeah [indignantly].
- DC: Why was that?
- EA: Do it all in one job, one trip. I mean, instead of three trips, you're doing it in one trip, all loaded up like that. I couldn't figure that one out for the longest time [laughs].
- DC: [laughs]
- EA: Never asked her why. We did not ask questions.
- DC: Oh, OK. That wasn't part of it.
- EA: No, we learned, and we just observed.
- DC: OK. So, I mean, could you ask questions, like, for instance what was a weed and what was a vegetable, or couldn't ask questions about . . .
- EA: Uh, I think we just knew. We were probably told. I don't know for sure [laughs].
- DC: You didn't ask questions about why you had to do the chores, is that it?
- EA: Oh never. We never asked questions about what we were told. We did what we were told to do. Never occurred to us to ask, 'why am I doing this and somebody else is doing that. I want to do that job.' That just didn't happen [laughs softly].
- DC: You just did what you had to do.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: Yeah. Um, so uh, did you share a room?
- EA: [laughs] Oh sure. Two beds in one room, and there would be two kids in each bed. In the other room, the same thing. And I remember the one room was real cold, but—OK, two sisters here, two sisters here, and the sisters get made at each other. And then we'd try and switch off [laughs]. It worked. [laughs]
- DC: What was the age range? How old were your oldest siblings?

- EA: Oh boy. [pause] I'm not sure. My oldest sister—OK, OK, she was born in “ought two.” She was born in [background noise]—one—of the year Mama lost the first baby. And that was in [short pause] '89—'99. Yeah. So my oldest sister was born zero [meaning 1900] or one [1901], one or the other. I'm not too sure.
- DC: OK, so considerably older.
- EA: Yeah, and I figured—I mean, Mama had to be pregnant a whole lot of the time. And I tell everybody, I don't think she liked being on the period [laughs]. She was pregnant all the time! [laughs]
- DC: I guess so.
- EA: That doesn't have to go in there either. [laughs]
- DC: Well does it matter if it is in there?
- EA: Oh I don't care. She won't care. I won't get reprimanded for that! [laughs]
- DC: I guess not now.
- EA: I have only one sister living yet.
- DC: OK. Where does she live?
- EA: Oklahoma.
- DC: That's quite a ways away.
- EA: [tone of sorrow] Yeah, sure is. I can't get her to come back here.
- DC: So uh, what was the school situation in Oswego? Did you have a school . . .
- EA: We had a country school where eight grades—however did those teacher[s] handle it. They had eight grades to teach in a regular school day. And she would have—my goodness—reading and writing and arithmetic, geography and history. How could she do all of that?
- DC: How many students were in the school?
- EA: Uh, about—I think the most at any time when I went there was about thirty-four, which was too many really.
- DC: Spread all over all those grades, yeah.
- EA: Yeah, I don't know how they did it.

DC: How far away from your house . . .

EA: Two miles. I had two miles to walk to country school for eight grades. And high school, in town, was another two miles in the opposite direction.

DC: Oh, OK. What was it like when you switched to the high school?

EA: Uh, I don't know if I liked it or not. I felt like—I didn't feel like I belonged to a certain—I don't know. I didn't—I wasn't a loner, but I wasn't in a clique either.

DC: Were there many in your grade who went from the eight-grade school, the one-room schoolhouse, to the high school?

EA: Yeah, a big difference. There would be two or three of us, maybe, in one class in the country school, down through all eight grades pretty much. Eight grades, thirty into eight . . .

DC: But did all of them go on to . . .

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: Unless they dropped out. Once in awhile, you know, kids—boys dropped out more than girls, because they needed to work on the farm. It was all farm land there.

DC: Now you were the youngest, so when your siblings got older, did they move away from the farm? Or did they stay around and help?

EA: Uh, yeah, once they got out of high school. They got married. Girls were supposed to get married and raise families in that day! [laughs] I'm glad things have changed. [laughs]

DC: So by the time that you were in high school, there wouldn't have been nearly as much help around the farm, would there?

EA: Right.

DC: So how did that affect you?

EA: [short pause] I don't know. [softly] Have all our chores and do them when we got home from school. Then it would be suppertime, and do the dishes, and time to go to bed.

DC: So you got all the things done that used to get done with all your siblings, without their help?

EA: Oh boy, I got to think about that one. [pause] Yeah, because, yeah, I didn't even get through—OK, summer vacation come along—I graduated from high school, I got summer vacation, and then I wanted to go on to college. But I didn't. Somebody from town come out and asked my mother, "Do you have any daughters yet that can come and work for me?" And that's what happened. I didn't question it. I had nothing to say about it. Away I go, trotting along, and went to work for her.

DC: Where was that?

EA: In town.

DC: In Oswego?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. And what kind of work was it?

EA: Just housework. Helping out. Like being a—not being a maid—it was just helping out with housework.

DC: OK.

EA: I never had to do the cooking. Hah! I could have learned something! [laughs]

DC: So you hadn't . . .

EA: I didn't do cooking at home. I was *outdoors*.

DC: OK.

EA: I didn't have to—yeah, the older ones—I didn't have to do that. They couldn't catch me in the house long enough, I guess. [laughs] I had me a favorite tree, a little apple tree I used to climb up in. And I'd get way up in that tree, and I could lean out on a branch and put my feet—twist my ankles around the branch below me and read a magazine, laying in the branches up there [laughs]. Nobody would know where I was at. I heard my Mama call my name, and of course I "didn't" hear it. Soon here comes my sister: "Didn't you hear your Mama calling you!" [laughs] And that was the end of that favorite tree.

DC: [laughs] So that was your hideout for a little while?

EA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DC: Then you got ratted out.

EA: Yes, by my sister next to me. Ooh. She was ornery sometimes.

DC: Oh really?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Towards you, or towards anybody?

EA: Probably me. Probably because she was next to the youngest. She had to have somebody she lorded over [laughs]. She could run faster than me. I couldn't get away from her. I had long hair, halfway down my back, and I would try and run away from her, and she'd just reach out and grab me by the hair. Could not run as fast as she did.

DC: What sorts of things would she pick on you about?

EA: Oh gee, I don't know [laughs]. Probably I did something to her and she was getting even with me. I don't know [laughs]. [mischievously] I doubt that.

DC: S you dished it out a bit?

EA: [still mischievously] I didn't do that. It wasn't my nature. I wanted to be happy.

DC: Was the church a part of your family's life?

EA: Oh yeah. Presbyterian.

DC: Presbyterian, OK.

EA: I remember—I can remember my Dad being in church, and then he had rheumatism real bad, and it come to where that he couldn't sit on the hard pews. It was just too hurtful. And he would stay home, and the rest of us walked to church.

DC: How far was that?

EA: Two miles.

DC: Two miles. Everything's two miles away.

EA: Yep. [laughs]

DC: Uh, was your Father still trying to work the farm when he had the rheumatism.

EA: Oh he did. He couldn't even hardly walk. He'd get out there and get those horses and stuff, and hitch them up to the plow and the cultivator and whatever, the thing he was using. And it was all he could do to get up on that seat. Once he was in the seat, he'd grab the reins and away he'd go and work the fields. All his life.

DC: How old was he at that point?

EA: Oh, he kept doing that until—my brother went out on the farm, I forget what year, for awhile. Daddy couldn't do it anymore. I really don't know.

DC: Did any of your brothers stay on to help?

EA: Uh, the one brother came back and worked the farm, after Dad couldn't do it anymore. My second brother and his wife lived there for awhile, and almost run it into the ground. Not a good expression [laughs], and didn't do well, but the other brother, he was, he was born a farmer. And his wife and family lived in the southern part of the state awhile, and then he came back home. And his family lived in town and then he went out and worked the farm.

DC: So one brother didn't have much farming sense and the other one did?

EA: Yeah. Yeah. Very much.

DC: Well, there's a lot to it.

EA: Yeah.

DC: I would surely run it into the ground if it were up to me.

EA: [laughs] Me too, because I didn't really learn a lot. We did what we were told. We never asked—my Father never told us *why* things were done a certain way. It was—that's the way it was. Nobody ever asked him *why*.

DC: So you never really learned much about the whole farming operation?

EA: Yeah! And I feel bad about that.

DC: Hmm, OK.

EA: I guess. What good would that have done! [laughs]

DC: It sounds like they were more interested in just making sure that specific chores got done . . .

EA: Yeah, whatever our chore was, that's what we did.

DC: Yeah. Hmm, OK. One thing I ask—I was thinking about when I was asking about the church—I wondered about the overall sense of community in that area. Did you, uh, do much with your farming neighbors? I realize they might have been a distance away, but did you . . .

EA: Yeah, pretty much, yeah. Oh, what's the word I want? To communicate—eh, there really wasn't a whole lot of that either, actually.

DC: Did anybody help each other out with specific jobs, I mean, or . . .

EA: [tentatively] We probably did work together, yeah, on whatever the job was, it would need more than one person working at it.

DC: Hog killing? Or . . .

EA: That was, yeah, that, that cattle and hog—like once or twice a year—that they would butcher. My Dad and my brothers, and I could stand off at a distance and watch, if they didn't chase me away [laughs].

DC: So they didn't necessarily want you involved in that?

EA: I didn't know—uh uh, stay out of the way. They would scald these pigs in a great big cauldron of hot water. Build a fire, and there was this pot of water, and they'd stick them in there, and then scrape all the hair and stuff off them, that kind of thing. Whew. Boy. And the organs always got eaten—the first thing that come out of the animal would be supper that night—the liver and the heart, stuff like that. Never did eat the brains. I hear people talking about that.

DC: It didn't appeal to you?

EA: No, because we didn't do it. If we had, I'd have probably thought it was great. But it didn't happen, so I thought it wasn't great, you know. That's the way I learn things—observation.

DC: It's what you did.

EA: Yeah.

DC: Did you have a smokehouse?

EA: Yeah! Oh [sniffing sounds] that'd be the first thing that would happen. Oh, the ham hocks would hang in there and get smoked, by certain woods. There would be apple wood, and there would be hickory wood, and there was a hedge that had good smoking woods. We had a whole row of hedge trees. I never wondered why we had hedge trees, but they were used for that purpose.

DC: Uh huh. Did you collect that wood?

EA: No, I didn't have to do that.

DC: You did the wood for the stove inside, but not . . .

EA: Yeah, when it was already chopped. I didn't have to—I'd have probably chopped my foot off if I'd have tried to do that [laughs]. We had chicken every Sunday for dinner. One time my sister and I was told to go chop the chicken's head off. We had a stump, about this big around, and there was two nails—you'd stick his head in here. The other one holds it, and the other one—Esther says, "I'm not chopping its head off." She hangs onto the feet, and I come down with the ax, and all I did was cut the skin here, and she lets go, like this, and away the chicken goes, flopping around, blood flowing all over the place [laughs]. Oh horrible. And then we never had to do it again [laughs]. You would think I'd have been smart enough to figure that out and do it on purpose [laughs].

DC: So these were chickens from the henhouse then?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. Were your cattle primarily for dairy then?

EA: [short pause] Yeah, milking cows, dairy. And the cattle were for meat.

DC: So you had beef cattle and dairy cattle?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Oh, OK, all right. Well that's a lot of work.

EA: Oh yes! And I had one sister that works outdoors with the rest of them, like she was a boy. I mean she wore these bib overalls all of her life, practically. And got right out there and worked with the guys.

DC: OK, so she was assigned to those chores, even if they weren't traditionally women's chores, huh?

EA: Yeah. I don't know why. I don't know if it was because she wanted to or because Dad asked her to. No idea.

DC: Because you had five sisters and two brothers . . .

EA: Yes! He didn't have enough sons! [laughs]

DC: Did your family ever hire anybody to help out?

EA: Yeah, he had a hired man, a few times. And we went after him with a pitchfork.

DC: Wait. Who went after whom?

EA: My Dad—even-tempered—the hired man—and this hired man had a pitchfork and rammed one of the horses on the rump. My Dad grabbed it and went after *him*! He never come back for his pay [laughs]. He never saw him again.

DC: Wow.

EA: And that was my Dad, even-tempered—don't mess with his animals. He loved his animals.

DC: OK, so this guy was trying to get the horse to move or something? With a pitchfork?

EA: Yeah, yeah. Prodded him, you know, a little prick on the rump to make him move [laughs]. I remember that.

DC: I bet you do.

EA: Yeah. One time thinking my Dad's going to save me. I was probably ten years old. My cousin was there from Minnesota, and we had a window work that was open, and they were standing outside. The window was high, and they was standing out talking. The window was open—I went and got a tub of water and dumped it on my cousin's head. [imitating kids' laughter] And forgot about it. And when I walked out the kitchen door to go outdoors, he was waiting for me, and grabbed me, carried me all the way up to the horse tank and dumped me in the horse tank. And everybody said my arms and legs was just going every which direction. "Daddy won't let you!" "Daddy won't let me!" And Daddy's standing there just a'smiling. [laughs]

DC: [laughs]

EA: I got dunked in that really yucky old tank with all that moss around the [laughs]

DC: A little payback here.

EA: I had it coming! [laughs]

DC: [laughs] Oh boy. When you went to do housework for the woman in town—once you graduated high school . . .

EA: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. And then your Mom assigned you to work in town. Did you live in town?

EA: Yeah. I stayed. I went on Monday morning and went home on Friday night.

DC: Oh, OK, so you stayed there during the week.

- EA: So I was home on the weekends, which was OK. It was five days of the week I didn't like at all. [laughs] I didn't like it.
- DC: What didn't you like about it?
- EA: It was *housework*. It wasn't outdoors. You know, I wanted to learn something—learn to be a secretary. I really wanted to go—they had a college in Naperville, close by there—to learn to be a missionary. And I really wanted to do that. And I don't know why—there just wasn't the money for it, I guess.
- DC: Was that something that—or, what made you want to be a missionary?
- EA: Ah, I think one time—OK, another story coming up! [laughs]
- DC: Sure, that's great!
- EA: Uh, we weren't going to have a Christmas tree that year. I thought, I don't care if we don't have presents. I don't care about anything else, but not to have a Christmas tree on Christmas—I just couldn't tolerate that. And I don't remember why—maybe there wasn't any more—we had—Daddy had a little patch of woods off of another road somewhere. Maybe there weren't any more trees. I don't know. I never asked him why. I thought—and I'm thinking, the program in church was over, and I'm going to go see if the tree is there. If it's been thrown out. So I went trotting off—didn't tell anybody where I was going—I was sneaking off. Went in, and here it was, laying out there in back of the church. So I went and knocked on the door. And this minister's wife had been a missionary, and she had me come in. She showed me her big old china cabinet with all these things that she got from China. And I was just, oh man, I was just thrilled. I couldn't imagine all that. And I think that's why I thought I would want to be a missionary, because of her.
- DC: So she had been in China?
- EA: Yeah, yeah. And she showed me all these things, just treating me like, ah—told me I could have the tree [laughs]. She gave me a cup of cocoa and a cookie. These things—you don't forget something like that. She was a gracious lady. So I went dragging that thing off, two miles, and down the road there's a little sidetrack where the buggies would go instead of the cars. And I'm dragging this down there. Every time a car would come, I'd put it over on the other shoulder, so they couldn't see who I was! [laughs] I was out begging a tree, or what. I don't know why I thought that was a comedown.
- DC: That was a long way home with that tree, wasn't it?
- EA: Yeah, and it had these—they nailed them onto these two long pieces of wood.
- DC: Sure.

EA: If I could have knocked them off of there, it wouldn't have been so heavy! The big old tree was so tall, they had to chop this much of the top off of it.

DC: To fit in the house.

EA: And that was my Christmas present for the family that year. And I had the privilege of decorating it all by myself. Oh, I thought that was a privilege. [laughs]

DC: I'm guessing—you're talking about China being an influence on you, the fact that she'd been a missionary in China and all. If you had a dairy farm like this, chances are your family didn't get to travel very much.

EA: Correct.

DC: Were you able to go anywhere?

EA: No! A Sunday ride when Daddy got—he was one of the first farmers when the automobiles started being big. He had this big old Hupmobile. [Built by the Hupp Motor Car Company in Detroit] I don't hear that name anymore. One of the first cars out.

DC: What kind of vehicle was it?

EA: Hupmobile.

DC: Hupmobile?

EA: H-U-P. Hupmobile.

DC: OK, I've never heard of them.

EA: I don't know. I got to look into that [she was right].

DC: All right. But he had one.

EA: Yeah, one of the first ones. He was one of the first—I didn't know it at the time. But he was one of the first farmers to have a windmill built, to pump the water. All us kids, and he went ahead and did that. [laughs]

DC: So it sounds like he was interested in new technology that came out.

EA: Yeah.

DC: New machines.

EA: Yeah, yeah. And he had carbide gas lights. We had kerosene lamps, and he, he had this big old, huge tank—you had to get up to it with a ladder, and carry pellets on your

shoulder and get up there and dump that in there, into the water, and this would form the gas. And it was piped into the house, and on the walls were these little doodaddies, that you turned on the gas, and put a light to it, and here you are. It's a wonder you didn't burn the house down! [laughs]

DC: Yeah.

EA: I remember seeing him climbing up that ladder and dumping those pellets in there.

DC: Ah, interesting. That would be quite a gadget at the time.

EA: Yeah! Yeah, it was—hey, we're coming up in the world! [laughs]

DC: Well I think you were about to say that maybe you went for Sunday drives, but that was about it.

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: And people say that the youngest—you've got that big of a family, and the youngest one is spoiled. Well I don't think so, but I do remember one—everybody wanted to go for a ride, you know—dinner's over, dishes done. "Let's see if we can get Daddy to take us for a ride." And they always put it up to me to go ask him. [laughs] So was I a favored one, or a spoiled little brat, or what?! [laughs] "Go ask Daddy if we can go for a ride." I'd go ask him, and away we'd go. [laughs] I don't know.

DC: Where would you go?

EA: Just around the farmland, to see what the other farmers are doing, and what the fields look like. Checking up on the other communities. Never to town and stuff, hardly.

DC: Did you ever stop to visit with people?

EA: Uh uh. Just went for the ride.

DC: Did you have any relatives around the area? Any aunts or uncles?

EA: Oh, aunts and uncles, yeah. We've even got a road named for us.

DC: Really?

EA: Yep.

DC: What was your family name?

- EA: Slapp Road. Slapp. S-C-H-L-A-Double P. And we never pronounced it Schlapp, it was Slapp.
- DC: OK. All right. Is that a German name?
- EA: Yeah, yep. Pennsylvania Dutch. [laughs]
- DC: Pennsylvania Dutch, OK.
- EA: [Laughs] Whatever that means.
- DC: Well, how long did you stay in town, then, doing the housework?
- EA: Oh, not, not too long, because then the next bad thing that happened, which was a whole lot worse—they moved to LaGrange, Illinois, which is just out of Chicago, and I went with them. So every other week I'd get two days off, get on the train and go home, and go back.
- DC: So instead of going every weekend, it was every two weeks.
- EA: Yeah, and then I'd get two days off instead of one day off.
- DC: Now this would have been right in the middle of the Depression, right? Is this the 1930s?
- EA: Yeah. A little after, yeah. We were coming back. I didn't know we were in the Depression. I had all the food I needed. I had clothes on my back. I was eating well on the farm.
- DC: So you didn't notice much difference at home?
- EA: I didn't—no, yeah—we were in the same boat everybody else was, and they weren't—we were OK, and we raised our own food, and we didn't go hungry. We weren't cold. So it didn't bother me. There were a lot of people it *did*, but that wasn't my worry [laughs].
- DC: Sure. OK, yeah.
- EA: I just wasn't aware of it.
- DC: Growing your own food must have made a big difference then.
- EA: Oh, yeah, definitely.
- DC: What did the family do whose housework you were doing?
- EA: He worked—he was a—I don't know if they have Jewel Tea Company around here or not, but this is a chain, and he was a manager of this. Yeah. There's Jewel/Osco, but I

don't think that was associated with the one he worked at. I think it just went out, or changed the name, or whatever.

DC: And so that was his business. And so, did the, did his wife stay home then, and you just helped her out?

EA: Yeah, yeah.

DC: And did they have a lot of kids or something?

EA: Two.

DC: Two kids. So she had help with two kids.

EA: Yeah. And the one, the one was—OK, maybe a couple years difference—but the baby, I would take for a walk every afternoon, in this great big, old huge wicker baby buggy—pull it up and down those steps. I mean, there must have been fourteen, fifteen steps on that thing—a good thing I didn't let loose of it. But I think I knew every street in that town, because I would walk all afternoon. The kid took its nap, and I just kept walking. As long as he's jiggling around, he's sleeping. She's just reading her magazine, doing whatever she did. [laughs]

DC: At least you're outside.

EA: Taking a nap—I'm out walking the kid around [laughs].

DC: Did you ever stop to think about her needing help with the two kids, while your Mom had eight—and my guess is that you didn't have outside help coming in to look after you.

EA: You're right! [laughs] We had one lady—I didn't have but one grandfather—the rest of them—when I come along. But this one lady in town would come out—well she came out as a midwife when Mama had her babies. She would be there a week or two. And I don't know if I really thought that she was my Grandma. We called her Grandma, all the time. And she would sit in that rocking chair and darn all our socks—the time that she would be out there. Now I don't know if this was a little—after—yeah. Because Mama wasn't having any more kids after me. And she would sit in that rocker darning the socks for us—we'd have holes in them.

DC: Sure.

EA: Heels. Holes in our shoes. Cardboard in our shoes [laughs]. That kind of thing. We weren't ashamed of it. We'd—it's what we did. Made things last. Got to do what you got to do.

DC: Certainly. But she would come out and help in that way.

EA: Uh hmm.

DC: Well that would be a very special skill.

EA: I think, I think it was like a vacation for her, and every summer she would be there.

DC: How long would she stay?

EA: Like a week or two. I don't remember for sure. I know it was at least a week. I think it was two weeks she would be there with us.

DC: Interesting.

EA: Yeah.

DC: So anyways, you went to La Grange, and—you were about to say something else, maybe?

EA: I thought she was beautiful, and actually she wasn't a pretty woman at all. Big and muscular, and she wasn't pretty. And I thought she was beautiful [laughs]. I guess I loved her like she was really my Grandma.

DC: It sounds like that you were . . .

EA: And I never sat in her lap. She never made a fuss over any of us kids. Just sat there darning the socks [laughs]. So . . .

DC: Was she a midwife for women throughout the whole area?

EA: I don't know that.

DC: Don't know. OK.

EA: I have no idea.

DC: When you—when kids were sick, or, you know, on a farm there can be injuries and stuff—did you have doctors to go to?

EA: Oh yeah, we had a doctor. Though they would go to the farms, mostly.

DC: They would make farm calls, yeah.

EA: Yeah, yeah. I probably never was in his office. Every little time—you know, we'd get the ordinary things that kids get. I probably never had whooping cough until I was growing old. Should have had it when I was young, you know.

- DC: Easier on you then, yeah, if you *survive*.
- EA: Yeah [laughs]. I remember mumps and measles. And I had scarlet fever. That was—they made me stay in bed for that, and boy, they don't do that now. It's a wonder I didn't get sick and die, making me lay in that bed.
- DC: Well, it sounds like you had all of those childhood diseases.
- EA: They had a—well now I'm immune to it, you know.
- DC: Right.
- EA: Now they won't let the kids get sick. How are they going to build up any immunity, to it?
- DC: All these inoculations, yeah.
- EA: Yeah. Oh, maybe they don't have to have immunity [laughs]. They shoot it into them.
- DC: I guess.
- EA: Whatever.
- DC: I didn't have scarlet fever, but I know I had mumps and measles and chicken pox and all those things.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: Well, how long did you work out in La Grange?
- EA: [a bit tentatively] About a year. [pause] I'm not sure. I think—well yeah, it couldn't have been more than that, because I came up here in Michigan about '35.
- DC: Really. That was one of my next questions.
- EA: I [laughs]—another story.
- DC: OK.
- EA: My brother came to Michigan, came up here, because we had cousins up here working in the auto factories. So he came up here. Had a roundtrip ticket. He didn't use the return. He got a ride back up to Michigan somewhere or another. And so he sent me the return ticket for me to use to come up. And that's how long I was in La Grange. I waited until the last day that ticket was ready, and I decided I'd use it.
- DC: Really. OK.

EA: Went out and got on the train—but that was a terrible thing I did. I mean, that was—I just can't believe that I was that inconsiderate. And I didn't tell them—I just, I left.

DC: You didn't tell them. Oh.

EA: Didn't say I'm not coming back.

DC: Did you tell your parents you were leaving?

EA: No—well they were off to Pennsylvania, somewhere, anyway. They was going the same time. I didn't know they were going away, you know.

DC: Were they on vacation, or had they left the farm.

EA: They had—on vacation. No, they went to visit relatives there.

DC: All right. So they were not in the area, but . . .

EA: Yeah, so it surprised me they were gone, so—I surprised them because I took off.

DC: So you just left.

EA: I can't *believe* I did that. One of my kids, my grandkids do that, I'd raise—cuss them out! But in that day and age you could do something like that, and not have fear.

DC: About your safety, you mean?

EA: Yeah!

DC: Right.

EA: Yeah. My own.

DC: But you were just nineteen, it sounds like.

EA: Uh huh. Yeah.

DC: So anyways, you went to Michigan, and your brother had been there, you said?

EA: Yeah, he was living there with some cousins.

DC: With some cousins, OK.

EA: So I got out here, had my little suit—I did have a little bitty suitcase—the clothes on my back and whatever I had in that suitcase, which wasn't very much. And I come, come out to Pontiac.

DC: So they were living in Pontiac?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: And my brother was—I thought he was—well, I guess he was staying with—he was working for my father-in-law, which he wasn't my father-in-law then. But he was working for the Dad, Harold. And I thought he was with Johnston—was the cousin's last name. And when I knocked on the door, I had the right address, but the wrong name. And the people next door to them by that name, they knew who I was, because they knew that I was on my way coming, so . . .

DC: Right.

EA: So they brought me in like I belonged there. [laughs] Oh, that was weird. And Don, at the time, wasn't living at home.

DC: Is that . . .

EA: My husband.

DC: OK.

EA: And he was across the street, rooming and boarding across the street, so he saw everything that went on. He was still working for his Dad. I think that he had a neon electric sign company, on Tregent [Street], and whatever. Down off of Baldwin.

DC: Now I've got to try to sort this all out. [laughs]

EA: [laughs]

DC: So you were staying in the same house as your brother, then, at this point?

EA: I thought he was there, but he was working for him.

DC: Working for him, but not living there.

EA: Right.

DC: OK, but they took you in anyway.

EA: Yeah, yeah, just because they knew who I was, and they knew him. Well I think—I think my brother was already starting to go with their daughter, Kay. And we ended up doing a double thing. Sister and brother married sister and brother.

DC: Hmm.

EA: So, later, a little later, not too much later, about six months later [light laughter].

DC: So anyways, it sounds . . .

EA: So he, he saw this strange girl going in and out of his folks' house, decided to go find out about it [laughs]. That's how we met [laughs].

DC: OK, yeah. That's very interesting. He had moved out of the house, but just across the street.

EA: Yeah. Uh huh.

DC: So . . .

EA: And I was going to—I was going to—I forgot all about this—I was going to just be there like a week or two, and go back home. And so my brother had, had planned out a good time for me. He had a date for me with a different guy every night of the week. And he was just going to show me around, and was going to go out and have fun, him and Kay and whoever. And Don wasn't one of them. But he's the only one I did go out with [laughs]. Got here—oh, a weird story.

DC: Had you dated much in Illinois?

EA: Well, some—well yeah. Go out with one guy for about a year, but I didn't like him that much. I—I double-dated with my sister and her boyfriend, and they got married. And I went with them, because we'd always go to the movies or something, you know, go on a date, you know, the movies, something to eat, and that's that. I didn't really like the guy that much [laughs]. But I got to go see the movies.

DC: Sure, that's all right. So anyways, when you went to Pontiac, it sounds like you only thought you would be there for a couple weeks.

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. But had you told the family back in La Grange that, or did you just disappear?

EA: I just disappeared.

DC: Disappeared. OK.

- EA: And I finally went back to get my stuff, and maybe apologized a little bit, but I was really feeling guilty. But I almost didn't even go back—what little I had there wasn't worth going for—to go through the humiliation [laughs]. Oh man! I just wasn't taught, you know, to do stuff like that. Be more considerate of other people. I don't know what they thought.
- DC: Well it sounds like this was a more powerful lesson than all of the words, combined.
- EA: Yeah, you're right. Yeah.
- DC: Well, it sounds like you went back to get your stuff, but you basically decided to stay in Pontiac.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: What did you do in Pontiac?
- EA: I wasn't too sure if I—well I went to work, at, at, doing housework. Which I hated. Yeah. People by the name of Shewert [sp?], and they lived out towards Birmingham, somewhere.
- DC: Stewart, you said?
- EA: Shewert. He was high mucky-muck in the auto shows every year. That's about all I remember about them.
- DC: And where did they live?
- EA: They had a nice house. I can't remember the address.
- DC: Was it in Pontiac?
- EA: I wouldn't be able to find it. It was on the edge of—there wasn't—in Birmingham. Like I say, I don't think I could even find the house now.
- DC: Anyways, did you go there on a daily basis?
- EA: Yeah, I lived there.
- DC: You lived in their house?
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: OK.

EA: Had my own room, which I thought—I did like that. But, yeah. I just, I think—I don't know. I didn't want to be somebody else's servant, I think. I suppose—I don't know. You roll with the punches.

DC: How did your situation with the Shewerts compare to your situation back in La Grange with that family?

EA: It was, it was better, I think, because—let's see—didn't have to do the cooking there either.

DC: OK.

EA: [laughs]

DC: Avoided cooking everywhere you went.

EA: I should have been doing it. I would have learned a lot more. I forget where I was, but they did teach me a lot.

DC: Did the Shewerts have children to look after?

EA: Yeah. Oh, well they were, like teenage.

DC: OK. Much different then.

EA: There was a daughter and a son, and the son was adopted, and he killed himself. And just, oh, that shook me up. I wasn't living there anymore. And then I was probably married by then. But he had borrowed the car, had a wreck, and he was—it just scared him so bad he did himself in. Just, um.

DC: But that was after you had stopped working there.

EA: Yeah, yeah.

DC: But you still knew him well.

EA: Oh, uh huh, yeah.

DC: What were your responsibilities then? You didn't cook with them.

EA: Just help with housework—cleaning and stuff like that. I think she even let me work outdoors in the garden a little bit one time. Of course I liked that. But they had a gardener who did that work, so . . .

DC: So you were the gardener's servant?

EA: Yeah [laughs]. I think I did that—I would have an hour off every afternoon to go to my room and read a magazine, take a nap, whatever I wanted to do. So, I liked to just go outdoors.

DC: I trust that the kids were in school then?

EA: Yeah. Uh hum.

DC: So it sounds like it wasn't really your dream job.

EA: That's for sure.

DC: So what happened next then?

EA: OK, let's see. I had already met Don when I went to work out there. I was probably there, at his folks', for a week maybe, and this woman that had been working for them—I don't know if she quit and did something else . . .

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

DC: . . . Seems to be working.

EA: I forgot that thing was on.

DC: Yeah, well, that's the goal.

EA: OK, what do we got to erase now? [laughs]

DC: Well, that's up to you.

EA: Nah.

DC: But anyways, I was paying attention to that, and I missed exactly what you said, but, uh, what I was trying to figure out is how long you worked for the Shewerts, and then what you did when you left the Shewerts.

EA: [softly] Probably when I got married, maybe. About there, I was going to—I was going to go back home.

DC: Oh, OK. So you didn't necessarily plan to get married at this point?

EA: Yeah, really. And this was in the wintertime. I remember it was real cold.

DC: Your first winter out there?

EA: I went back and I was . . .

DC: It would have been your first year there—you first winter there?

EA: Uh yeah. [pause] [softly] Yeah it had been in—got on the train, and went to Chicago—went to Aurora to my sister's house. And I always stayed in my sister when I would have time off or something, pretty much. And we'd get out to the farm to see Mom and Dad, and then go back to work. Stuff like that. So—[more confidently] OK, I went back home. And Don came down to get me [laughs].

DC: Ooh.

EA: He did the running. He did the chasing. And I finally let him catch me [laughs].

DC: So he came back, to Illinois?

EA: He came down to Illinois to get me, and I come back up here.

DC: Wow.

EA: And got married down there.

DC: Back in Illinois?

EA: Yeah. Went down there and my sister and her husband kind of—they stood up with us—talked me into it. Another thing—rolled with the punches—like I didn't have anything to say about the matter. [laughs] This is a serious thing they got me into. [laughs]

DC: Marriage. Yeah.

EA: Yeah, that's how that did happen. At least it was in the church when we got married. It wasn't at the Justice of the Peace. I was happy about that, but I didn't have any flowers. [laughs]

DC: Really? No flowers?

EA: No, I didn't have any flowers. Well I didn't even think about it, you know. Went to by a dress, and couldn't find a pretty dress—it was the ugliest dress I ever owned. I hated that thing. It was green. It was terrible. I did not look good in it. [laughs] Glad I don't have any pictures.

DC: How long did you plan this wedding?

EA: It wasn't really planned. I mean, it happened. And we weren't going to tell anybody. We was going to come back up here—I was going to go back to work, and he would blah, blah, blah. Anyway, we got to his folks' house, and big mouth!

DC: It would be hard to keep it a secret.

EA: He had blabbed—I think so—yes it would. [laughs]

DC: What was Don doing at that point in time?

EA: Working at Fisher Body.

DC: Fisher Body, OK. How long had he been doing that? Oh, go ahead.

EA: He hadn't been working there too long, I think, because like, yeah, we come home, he worked about three days and got laid off. [laughs] Not good news.

DC: And was this 1936?

EA: '35.

DC: You got married in '35?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. So he got laid off. How did you survive? What did you do?

EA: We lived with his folks.

DC: Ah, OK.

EA: And that went on for three months. And we got our little apartment on the next street down. We were close to home.

DC: Were you working at that time?

EA: [thinking noises] No.

DC: OK.

EA: No.

DC: So you had left the Shewerts. You weren't working for them.

EA: No.

DC: Yeah.

EA: Went to Illinois, got married, come back home. I was going to go back to work doing something, somewhere, you know. Then old blabbermouth, he [laughs]. So I was just part of the family then. Stayed three months with them.

DC: And then you found your own place.

EA: Then he, uh—then he was working for his Dad, so that fed us, you know.

DC: He was able to work back with the family, had a job.

EA: Yeah, uh huh.

DC: OK, so then you were able to get your own apartment. Where was that?

EA: Like the next street.

DC: Oh, next street over, OK.

EA: Yeah. About three houses away from his folks.

DC: Did Don ever get called back to Fisher Body?

EA: He got, yeah, he called back. He was working at Fisher, was laid off, and then he went to—now I'll remember. What's that other?—Truck and Coach. And he was working two jobs for like a couple of weeks there until they caught up with him and had him quit one or the other.

DC: He was working at both Fisher and Truck and Coach?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Oh really.

EA: Can't say he didn't work. I would say the man worked. He did not shirk.

DC: Now was he trying to ensure that he had at least one job by holding two?

EA: I, uh, probably, yeah. It was twice as much money! [laughs]

DC: Right, yeah, yeah. But he wasn't really allowed to do that, huh?

EA: Well, I think—I think it was catching up to him physically and otherwise, that they decided he'd better take it easy. And then work on the weekends—he did a lot of

weekend work, driving cars to Muskegon, from [hotel?]. I don't know that end—driving
...

DC: What exactly was that?

EA: Hmm?

DC: What exactly was that? Driving these cars?

EA: The new cars.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: The truck—the car haulers. He would go to—he did the Muskegon trips, and he would go—yeah, when he was laid off. Wasn't working in the shop. But he would take a trip to—forgot the name of it—like New York, Pennsylvania, and the East. And then put them on a train.

DC: Shipping cars out there? And then put them on a train?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Would he drive an individual car, or would he drive a truck loaded with cars?

EA: Yeah.

DC: A truck loaded with cars?

EA: Yeah. And there would be a convoy of them. Like maybe, maybe six or seven haulers, and he would either be the first one or the last one. And there was another buddy—had the two of them. So he kept everybody else in line, and what have you.

DC: Mmm.

EA: And sometimes it'd be individual. And he'd be on his way back to get another load, and people was still going East.

DC: Oh OK. He moved it huh?

EA: Yeah. He'd get in two trips instead of one.

DC: Wow.

EA: So he was a worker. He was a hard worker. Yep.

DC: So, when he had to choose between Fisher Body and Truck and Coach, which did he drop and which did he keep?

EA: He did the—Fisher's, because it was closer to where we lived.

DC: OK.

EA: It was within walking distance.

DC: Do you remember what his job was there?

EA: Assembly.

DC: Assembly, OK. And what were you doing at that time?

EA: [thinking noises]

DC: This would be in your new apartment.

EA: I wasn't—yeah—living with the folks yet. I went to work for his Dad, and he had the neon sign company on Tregent. And I worked for almost a year, doing his office work.

DC: OK, office work. How did you like that?

EA: Oh, I loved it!

DC: You did?

EA: Yeah. He taught me everything I had to know and what to do—make out schedules and worksheets and made their checks—but he had to sign them. The only time I did something wrong, boy I thought I committed a crime. I let a guy have his check before Dad was ready to release them. So—I wasn't supposed to do that, but I did it all the time. Why? I don't know why. He was a guy—maybe he owed him money, or maybe he just, I don't know—because he was the only one. The rest of them was all right, but not that one guy.

DC: Not the one guy. OK.

EA: Whatever.

DC: Well, you wouldn't necessarily know all that. But I remember at one point you had talked about becoming a secretary. This sounds like it was closer to that . . .

EA: When I was still—when I was still in high school, before I graduated, that was kind of a little dream—either be a missionary or be a secretary. I thought secretaries made a lot of

money. And I was going to buy a car for my mother. She doesn't even drive. But this—this was something that I wanted. I wanted to do something for my Mom.

DC: So your Mom didn't drive at all when you were growing up?

EA: No. Uh uh. Liked the buggy! [laughs]

DC: Oh, OK, all right. So your Dad liked the cars, but your Mom was a horse-and-buggy woman.

EA: Yeah [laughs]. Yeah.

DC: But would she drive . . .

EA: But when this was—she probably didn't with all of us kids. But we would have bobsled, that was loaded with hay, that we would keep warm, and all the kids in it. Hitch up the horses, and we would go—the aunts and the uncles, whenever there was an anniversary, there was a party at their house. These were the things that, that I'd do often. And I'd fall asleep on the couch somewhere, trying to stay awake, and I'd hear all these noises. It would sound like a beehive. All these voices going on, like it would get me dizzy—I'd be gone. I couldn't stay awake. They had to put me to sleep. In the wintertime, I would feel the cold air. My Daddy would be carrying me out to the bobsled, to the hay and the straw and stuff . . .

DC: When it was time to go?

EA: Stay warm. I remember waking up, that cold air, and then I'd go back asleep once I got in the bobsled. [laughs] He'd carry me in the house.

DC: Now that's service.

EA: Yes. Yeah. Nice, nice memories to have.

DC: No kidding.

EA: I really loved my father. My Mom too, but—I hate to admit it, but I was closer to my Dad than I was to my mother. I don't know why. He just didn't talk about them—because I liked to be outdoors. I liked the outdoors. One time I know my Daddy loved me. Oh. I made him cry. I was out with her, and he was digging this quack grass stuff. You can't cut it off, because then it gets more roots. He would take the fork and dig up the roots and pull it out, by the roots, and get rid of the roots. We went in this one little field, that had been plowed, but these wads were coming up. And I laid my foot down in that cool dirt, that black dirt—oh, that was pretty soil. In the corn belt, and that soil was black. I had my toes all down in that cool dirt, and he come down with the pitchfork, and, and he hit my foot. And, aw, he felt so bad, he had tears in his eyes. And all it did—just this skin right here between the toes? That's the only place it hurt. Went

through there, and you can see where it bled. Said, “You go back to the house and have Mama take care of that.” He had tears in his eyes.

DC: Sure. Oh my.

EA: That was worth the hurt. [laughs]

DC: Yeah. How long did you stay on doing the clerical work at neon sign?

EA: Um, until I was—got pregnant.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: That’s how I quit. It was almost, almost a whole year that I worked for him. And I did like it, because I could look out and see the street.

DC: Did you work on while you were pregnant, or did you stop once you found out you were pregnant?

EA: No, I stayed on awhile. And then we were living with them when Audrey was born.

DC: Audrey?

EA: Yeah, my daughter.

DC: OK. And when was she born?

EA: ’38.

DC: OK.

EA: And Don was in ’40. Four kids would have been nice, but we only had two.

DC: Two, OK.

EA: Like I could—no, I can’t say it. [laughs] Can’t say it now, with that thing going.

DC: Well, do you want me to turn it off?

EA: I’ll tell you later. Well, OK . . . [tape recorder off]

DC: Oh, yeah. That’s funny.

EA: It was worth a laugh. [laughs]

- DC: Oh, OK. So you stopped working. What was your husband's employment situation? What was Don's employment situation like then, while—Audrey was born in '38—was he working then? The auto industry was shut down . . .
- EA: He was on the second shift.
- DC: Second shift, OK.
- EA: At Pontiac Motor.
- DC: Oh, he had gone to Pontiac Motor.
- EA: Yeah, this was Pontiac Motor.
- DC: When did he move from Fisher Body to Pontiac Motor? Somewhere in there?
- EA: OK, I think I made a mistake.
- DC: OK.
- EA: When he left—yeah, it wasn't Fisher's—it was Pontiac Motor and the Truck and Coach, but he left Truck and Coach—gave up that job. Then he went to Pontiac Motor.
- DC: OK, so he left Fisher Body for three months, but when he got jobs after that it was at Pontiac Motor and Truck and Coach.
- EA: Uh huh. Yeah. Stayed there. He then became an electrician there.
- DC: Hmm. OK. When did he do that?
- EA: He was—well his Dad gave lessons on electricians—electric—and he had a class at the high school, I think, or somewhere around, and Don was in the class. Learned more, and became an electrician then.
- DC: Was this through the sign company, or just on the side, or what? The class?
- EA: I don't remember.
- DC: OK. But he knew enough about electrical work to teach it.
- EA: Oh he knew the electric. And he'd climb those beams in the shop. He was a strong man. Another story: there was a little guy that worked with him. And he had to get up to cut something up in the beams up here. So Don says—they didn't have anything to put the ladder against—Don says, "Get on the ladder." Told this little guy. And he's standing there holding the ladder, and this guy climbs the ladder to go up there and cut some wires.

DC: Straight up.

EA: Yeah. [laughs] He'd holding it.

DC: Was he a tall man?

EA: Talk about a big man. He was not *tall* tall, but yeah [coughs] he wasn't quite six foot, but he had strength, oh man.

DC: So what was it like when Audrey was born?

EA: OK. He was on—he was on the second shift, when she was conceived. I don't know if he was still working then. That's why she's such a night owl. I believe that. I actually believe that [coughs]. I need to find me a cough drop. We both worked overtime. We both had bonds taken out of our checks. So he's got a stack of these things, and this is in the '60s. And then a lot of interest stuff piling up on them. So he was in the nursing home for almost two years before he died. And before that he was looking at his bonds, going, "Look at all the fun you can have when I'm gone." "Look at all the fun you can have when I'm gone." Blah, blah—I heard that a few times. And he took it with him, because he ended up in a nursing home, and that's what paid his keep. And I was like three months away from when I was going to sign up for Medicaid.

DC: When was this now? The '60s?

EA: This was '93, when he died.

DC: Oh OK. He had the bonds in the '60s, but then . . .

EA: Yeah, and I was cashing these things in—interest is income. I get me a nasty letter, and penalty, from the government. I owed them three thousand dollars.

DC: Ooh. Ouch.

EA: Whoa. I hadn't claimed it. I had—I just didn't think about it. You're running out there everyday, taking care of stuff and doing stuff, how can you think of that?

DC: Oh boy. Well, you had to take care of business first.

EA: Yeah.

DC: When Audrey was born in '38, was Don's employment situation stable at Pontiac Motor?

EA: Yeah.

DC: It was. OK. And it was on second shift . . .

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. All right.

EA: And she is a night owl.

DC: So she wanted to wait up until he got home.

EA: Hmm?

DC: Did she want to wait up until he got home?

EA: [laughs] Oh, she would be—and he was on days when little Donny was born.

DC: OK.

EA: And Don likes to get up in the morning, and get the day going—let's go! Go, go, go!

DC: So there's a connection between the shift Daddy's on and . . .

EA: I swear! It's got to be.

DC: Were you home with the kids then?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. How did that go for you?

EA: I kept busy and doing stuff. I was always doing something of some kind. I was always making my own spending money, like for foolish stuff, you know.

DC: How so? What kinds of things did you do?

EA: I painted—did textile painting. Did ties and hankies and scarves and blah, blah, blah. Whatever would sell. And I did pretty good.

DC: You were able to do that with two young kids?

EA: Uh huh. Yeah, because I'm home. You know, so you do something like that.

DC: I'm just curious because, you know, the housework didn't seem to be your favorite, you know, when . . .

EA: [laughs] Right!

DC: And here you are at home. Was it any different for you when it was your house?

EA: [short pause]

DC: I wish I could capture that look on your face. [laughs]

EA: Oh, off of the record, it was never my house. It was *his* house. I never called him up on it. I never said anything. But in my mind, I'd think, "Why should I bother about this. That's his house. It's not my house. It's always his house." He could have said, "*Our* house," when he's having conversation with somebody. [laughs] Never said, "Our house."

DC: You noticed that at the time.

EA: Yeah. And it bugged me. But it wouldn't have done any good to say anything, because he'd have gone right on saying the same thing anyway, and it would not have meant a *thing* to him.

DC: But you noticed it then.

EA: Yeah! And it was a hurtful thing. So [pause]

DC: Yeah. I can understand. Um, did you sense that that was a common feeling—that men felt that the houses were theirs? Or did you sense that your situation was different?

EA: I just—yeah. I probably shouldn't have felt that way.

DC: Well I don't know about that.

EA: [laughs]

DC: That was the way you felt. I don't know if there's any "should've" involved. But that's a very interesting point. Uh, and then, uh, back to my other point—did it make any difference doing housework in *his* house, as opposed to in the Shewert's house?

EA: Sure.

DC: Did you like it better? Or worse?

EA: Oh well, no, no, you know, it was better. It was for me too.

DC: It was for you too.

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: Just not acknowledged.

- EA: I didn't get that. Yeah. [laughs] It just was a little old barb. He kept picking at me. That's all.
- DC: What sorts of things did you spend the money on? You said it was for "foolish" stuff. But what did you mean by that? I mean the money that you made from your side work.
- EA: Gifts for other people. I always—yeah—whenever when we were both working—I mean, nothing was ever established. He paid the bills. There was no question, whatsoever. What was his was mine and what [was] mine was mine. [laughs] Yeah, he never mentioned anything to me about anything that I was—it was for gifts.
- DC: You could do what you wanted.
- EA: For birthdays and Christmas—yeah, oh yeah. In fact [giggles], when I would want some things, I finally learned this—I maybe took advantage of it, or thought, "Hey, maybe this will work for me"—he didn't want me to go to work in the first place, in the shop. But once he got used to having more money to spend for beer, and the good whiskey instead of belly-rot, he had more money to spend. So if I wanted something, I'd threaten to quit. [laughs]
- DC: When did you start working in the shop?
- EA: '53.
- DC: Oh OK. So that's down the line a little bit here.
- EA: Oh yeah. Yeah.
- DC: We'll sneak up on that.
- EA: '53, and I went out the end of '72.
- DC: So you had a good long time in there.
- EA: Yeah, yeah. I've been retired a lot longer than I worked—getting my *pension*. [laughs]
- DC: All right.
- EA: My pension, part of his pension, and my Social Security.
- DC: Did you ever consider—well, let's see—back up there—I heard you say that Don didn't want you working in the plant, but did it ever cross your mind to work outside the home during World War II?
- EA: Well I worked—I worked at Andover Junior High, on, what, Long Lake.

DC: OK.

EA: I think that's where it was.

DC: During the war?

EA: For a year, while we were laid off, in '58. We had a long layoff.

DC: That's way—OK.

EA: So I worked a whole year there, and had gone back to clean up, like two days before school was to open. We had to go clean up the cupboards and that kind of stuff. And I got the call to go back to work. And I had hardly worked a day or two there, and I thought, "Now which one do I want to keep?" I'm going all that many miles, working part-time, wearing the car out. I go in the shop, I'm making bigger money—a whole lot more. Full-time, but hey—I thought, "Yeah, I'm going where it pays."

DC: Now were you both laid off in '58?

EA: No.

DC: Or just you?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK. And you said you were laid off for a year?

EA: Yeah, it was a long layoff. And before that time, well I had it made. I mean this was perfect. Kids were in school. I would get laid off for the model change. I'd be home during the summer. Kids would be out of school—I'm home for that. And model starts up, kids are in school. And it worked out perfectly for me.

DC: Yeah. I want to talk a lot about that job pretty soon, but I just want to get a little quick handle on what it was like—you would have had two young kids during World War II, and it was a time when a lot of women took jobs in plants, because the men were off fighting the war. I just wondered if you knew anybody who did that, or if you ever thought about doing that?

EA: Ah, no. Not at that time. Uh uh. But when I did go in, and I'd go to a different plant and they didn't know me, they thought I had seniority than *they* did, and I *didn't*.

DC: Oh, OK. So they thought that you . . .

EA: So I just kept my mouth shut, and I'd get bumped onto the second shift, once they'd find out.

DC: Until they found out, you mean.

EA: Yeah.

DC: Oh, OK. So eventually they would actually look it up.

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: But just looking at you they would assume that you had been working . . .

EA: Yeah, my age. I was older when I hired in, because they went in in the '40s—'45, along in there, and I went in in '53, so big difference.

DC: Did you work outside the home at all during World War II?

EA: [thinking noises]

DC: Your kids would have been very young.

EA: No.

DC: No. OK. And did your husband stay on at Pontiac Motor throughout the war? Or did he get drafted?

EA: No. He was 4-F. He was—had a hole in one of his eardrums.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: When he was a child, he had an illness, and it broke the eardrum, so [inaudible]

DC: So he was ineligible . . .

EA: Yeah.

DC: . . . for the service, OK.

EA: 4-F.

DC: Um, was he still an assembler at that point, or was he an electrician during the war?

EA: Oh man. [pause] I'm not sure.

DC: OK. That's OK.

EA: [laughs]

DC: When you were home with the kids and you were doing the textile stuff, did you ever—um, I'm trying to think—did you want to do something outside the home? Or were you content to be in the home?

EA: No, I was happy to be in the home.

DC: OK.

EA: They were too little for me to be out. So when I did—junior high age. Let's see, Audrey would have been—or she might have been junior high yet when I first went to work. I went to work for Atlantic—the A&P store [grocery chain] when it was on Pike Street.

DC: OK. Was that your first job outside the home after the kids were born?

EA: [after a moment's thought] Yeah.

DC: And . . .

EA: Don't remember what year it was.

DC: But it was before you got the job at the plant?

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah.

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK, and it sounds like Audrey—if Audrey was in Junior High School, then it would probably have been early '50s or something.

EA: Yeah. Or a little bit before. Because I hired in in '53, and it was before that.

DC: So, how did your family get along financially when you were at home with the kids?

EA: [short pause, flat affect] Made do. Never got ahead. But we—we made out.

DC: Did you buy a home? Or stay in the apartment?

EA: Oh, yeah, we rented for nine years. That was wicked. Money down the drain. '47 we bought, where I am now.

DC: Oh really. OK. '47. Where is that? I guess I didn't see the address down there [on the release form].

EA: Right over here. On East New York.

DC: OK. All right.

EA: Walking distance.

DC: Was that a consideration—that it was close to the plant—when you bought that house?

EA: Yes, we were looking. We were looking to buy a place. Every time we'd get enough money saved up for a down payment, the down payment would be higher. That's how come we kept renting for nine years. We never could quite get enough money together. So we had—we borrowed some—we borrowed—I don't know where the money come from, but we had to have whatever. And we borrowed the last of what we needed from his Dad. He was the last one we paid off. [laughs] Relatives, you know. And I remember that, because I have loaned money to my grandkids, and they're all getting to be paid off now—one that, of course, it's never going to happen. The one in Milwaukee that's, forget it, you know. It'll never happen.

DC: Hmm. But anyways, you finally got your own home. How was that, then, to have your own home?

EA: Well, good. Yeah. That was a happy feeling. It was like—the logs are this way—like a log cabin. And we were both of the nature to like that, to have a log cabin, you know. But I come up out of the basement—here was this—facing the east was this great big rainbow. I said, "This must be the place."

DC: Yeah.

EA: Took that for a sign. I thought, "That's got to be the place." It wasn't on the market yet, so . . .

DC: Did you have any idea . . .

EA: . . . someone, whoever told us—I don't know who we went through, but somebody was showing us around. I don't remember now.

DC: So let's see—did you—were there other Moms staying home with kids around the area then? Did you hang out with any of these folks?

EA: Oh yeah. We lived on First Street [pause]. It's not there now. General Motors bought that side of the street. The other side's still got houses on it, I think. Haven't been down there in awhile. Forgot what I was going to say.

DC: I was wondering if there were other kids in the neighborhood for your kids to play with—other Moms to be with.

- EA: Oh yeah. Kaffeeklatches and all that kind of stuff, yeah.
- DC: OK, yeah. And what kinds of things did your kids get involved with when they were in grade school?
- EA: Regular, whatever, activities the school had to offer.
- DC: OK. Did they get involved in scouts or sports or anything like that?
- EA: Oh, OK. Let's see, Audrey was in the Brownies [pause]—I'm trying to think of what Don was. That wasn't on First Street, though. He was too young. When we lived here, he signed up—he was going to be on the football team. He climbed a tree across the street and sprained his ankle—that was the end of the football. [laughs]
- DC: Oh gee. [pause] And was your husband's work, again, secure throughout that period? You got your house, and you know, you had a hard time getting ahead enough to buy the house. You know, were you able to keep up with the payments OK? Was his employment solid throughout there?
- EA: [quiet, flat affect] Yeah. Picked up, yeah.
- DC: What finally motivated you to work outside the home? You had the job at A&P.
- EA: Yeah, that was way back. And that was just part-time.
- DC: That was part-time, OK.
- EA: I didn't make too much, but it was a diversion. I'd get away from home a little bit, and the kids were old enough to be OK at home without me there.
- DC: OK, so that was part of your consideration, that they were a little bit older, and it was OK to be away a little bit, yeah. Did you enjoy the A&P job?
- EA: [According to notes, an enthusiastic facial expression] Yeah! Oh yeah.
- DC: What about it did you like?
- EA: Just being there. I went in one day—a friend of mine was working at the checkout—and I said something to him, almost in a flip way, and the manager was right there at the time. We called him "Pappy Cramp." [laughs]
- DC: Pappy Cramp? OK.
- EA: His name was Cramp.
- DC: It was. All right. Not a flattering nickname, otherwise.

EA: And she had started working there, and had been working there not too long, and she was like my closest friend, anyway. And I said, “How about getting a job?” And she said, “Well go ask him.” I went and asked him and went to work the next day. Just like that.

DC: What did your husband say about that?

EA: He didn’t have anything to say about it [laughs]. So, I’m going to go to work. And it was all right with him.

DC: It was. OK. But you said earlier he didn’t want you to work outside the home.

EA: He didn’t want me working in the *plant*.

DC: In the *plant*.

EA: In the plant. Because dirty jokes, nasty language, blah, blah, blah. And I worked at this Andover Junior High and heard more dirty jokes in that place than I ever did in the shop.

DC: Was that from the teachers, or from the students?

EA: Just the people that worked—the workers . . .

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: . . . that worked in the cafeteria and in the kitchen.

DC: So you thought that was a fouler language environment than . . .

EA: By far!

DC: Oh, by far. How funny. How funny.

EA: [laughs]

DC: OK. But anyways, at A&P, um, what was your specific job at A&P?

EA: I ground coffee. OK? When you go in, you go down the line here, and I was in this little—worked with this girl—at this separate little counter we sold candy bars, chewing gum, cigarettes—I think that was it. Yeah. And you could look all the way—we could look all the way up the aisle. When people first come in the door, they started down that aisle, and you know who they are. They come the same time every week, ordered the same kind of coffee every week, the same kind of ground, ground exactly. By the time they come to the counter, I’d have it ready for them. Oh they thought that was just—they’d then feel important. [laughs] Made me feel good. It was a nice thing. And it saved time. So—and at the end of this, where we were, there was peanuts and cheese cut

up over here. Once in awhile we'd get some peanuts off the shelf and would be in there eating cheese and peanuts together. And throw them out—the meat counter was right over here—we'd throw a package of gum for them and they'd throw back a hot dog or something.

DC: [laughs]

EA: That was fun. I enjoyed it, yeah. That was a fun job. I had a good time there.

DC: What hours did you work there?

EA: OK, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. It was kind of bad in a way, on the weekend, because kids were home from school, you know, on the weekend.

DC: Did you work while they were in school?

EA: Thursday night, yeah. I can't remember the hours, if I went in in the afternoon? Whether it was just on the weekend. It wasn't during the whole week.

DC: Did your husband work Saturdays?

EA: It's—so at that time, I don't think he was. I think it was regular time at that time.

DC: Yeah. So why did you leave A&P?

EA: [pause] [sighing] Oh. Can't think of what year it was. [short pause] Maybe that's when I went in the shop.

DC: Because it sounds like you really liked it.

EA: It would have to be—oh that other job was somewhere else.

DC: What other job was that?

EA: That was in the high school.

DC: That was the '58, yeah.

EA: And I didn't go back. Hmm. To do something better, evidently.

DC: I guess.

EA: I can't recall.

DC: That's OK. Um, what finally turned things around for you to finally get a job in the shop, then? You said that your husband didn't want you in the shop. And yet you did go in the shop in '53. What—what—what changed? What happened?

EA: [short pause] [light mumbling, sort of thinking semi-out loud]

DC: How did you decide to go in the shop?

EA: Darned if I know. [laughs] Oh boy. I've got to know that.

DC: Oh, that's OK. We can talk about it [talk over each other] . . .

EA: Paid better money. Paid better money.

DC: Paid better money. OK. Did Don object to you going in the shop at that point?

EA: Well, he wasn't all gung-ho about it, but once he got used to it, it was fine. It was all right then.

DC: OK. Did your family need the money at that point?

EA: Well, we thought we did. Because we weren't getting ahead. You know, we were just breaking even, payday to payday. Like everybody else. I guess I wanted more. [laughs]

DC: Yeah. Did you have a car at that point?

EA: Reading my mind, or what?!? [laughs]

DC: [laughs]

EA: Yeah, I got my own car. I got, I think—OK, hired in in '53—Don didn't work for a year or more, and I'm thinking to myself—and I was bumped off on the second shift, and I had to ride with somebody. And I'm thinking, he drives to work, why don't I drive to work. I went out and bought me a car! [laughs] Yes.

DC: What shift did you start out on when you first went . . .

EA: I started out on days.

DC: On days. You got bumped to second shift.

EA: Yeah, well I think I worked a little while, stayed on days for awhile, for whatever reason. And because, yeah, we were—worked [pause]—because I'd have the summers off. I'd hire in in the fall, and about springtime, maybe, I would get bumped onto the second shift. Somebody else decided they wanted to be on days instead, you know, and I'd get bumped.

DC: Yeah.

EA: But it did work out pretty good. And then I'd be laid off, so . . .

DC: You were laid off?

EA: During the summer.

DC: During the summer, for model changeover. What was your job when you first hired in?

EA: I hired in at Plant 4, and believe it or not, they were still making war material.

DC: Oh really.

EA: The war was over! We were making rocket heads.

DC: Oh really.

EA: Big old heavy things, and I worked on a drill press.

DC: A drill press.

EA: And I *liked* the job. These things were heavy, but I learned how to do it. [laughs]

DC: So you really liked it.

EA: And not hurt my body doing it.

DC: Uh huh. How did you learn the job?

EA: Just do what they told me. You just put these—they'd come in baskets. They had a conveyor line that come around, and we'd just—our table would—there would be about this much space and we'd grab the handle, pull it out, and just flipped it over on here, and one at a time onto the drill press.

DC: On the drill press, OK. Can you describe how a drill press worked?

EA: Just . . .

DC: Can you describe for me how the drill press worked?

EA: Yeah. There's a round thing here, and you just "pop"—you stick it on here, then there was three holes that fit on here, to hold it in place. And push a button, the machine comes down, and drills these little, three little holes on the side of it. And then, automatically, turns off. You take it off, and then you have a little burr. A little thing

that burrs, because you got the little things that hang on, and you'd burr that little edge off. I couldn't stop it quick enough. I was not good at that. So—but there would be two people that would change off, back and forth, do this and then do the other. And they'd just leave me on the drill press, because I'd go—I got [?], I'd go whoosh—and I couldn't stop myself. I'd go whoosh. And I would take extra. I'd take off more than needed to come off. So . . .

DC: Did those parts have to be thrown out, or could you repair them?

EA: Ah, I don't know what they did do with them. I mean a lot of that stuff passed, and shouldn't have, but they weren't actually using them. What a waste! Government. And they never got used for anything. I don't know whatever happened. I suppose they melted them down, put them in a [short pause] melt it down, use it over. Whatever.

DC: Were there other women on the job with you?

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah? Was it mostly women?

EA: Well like, yeah, one that was for drill, and the other one would burr the holes, and switched back and forth.

DC: Were there any men in that particular department?

EA: Yeah.

DC: OK.

EA: Yeah.

DC: So it was men and women mixed together?

EA: Yeah.

DC: But you were working with women?

EA: The day I hired in it was so noisy in there, I thought boy, one hour of this, I'm going home. I couldn't understand—a great big old gorilla guy, and I couldn't hear what he was saying. He had to holler at me. Like three hours later I was getting better at it. I thought I guess I'll stay until noon.

DC: Was he your boss?

EA: He was breaking me in. Breaking me in on the job. Telling me what to do, how to do it. So about noontime, I thought, well, it ain't so bad. I guess I'll go to work the next day.

[laughs] And I had to ride down to this—this was down on Plant 4, down on Howard Street, and Baldwin. Ride the bus down there and go in to work.

DC: Did you get used to the noise?

EA: Oh yeah. By noon it wasn't quite so bad, and the next day I thought, well, I guess I stood it for one day. I'll do another day. By the third day, I'm all broke in. [laughs]

DC: OK.

EA: Happy to go in. And I had a good time. Throwing wet rags around until you get caught. [laughs]

DC: [laughs] What other sorts of things did you do for fun in the plant?

EA: Well, one day, hee hee hee, oh man—I had me a matchbox, and I had a live mouse. I took it to work, and turned the mouse loose. Those guys were up on the tables. We were all laughing—poor little mouse. Boy what a wicked thing I did to that poor little animal.

DC: So the guys were afraid of it?

EA: Yeah, they were afraid it would run up their pant legs. Boy they were on the tables and jumping up and everything there. [laughs] Yeah, that was another fun thing. [laughs]

DC: Your husband was worried about the foul language and all that stuff. You said it was worse at the [junior] high school, but what kind of environment did you find in the plant?

EA: [short pause] I don't know how to describe it. We just, you know, got to see the people. You'd get to know them, and yak, yak, yak, telling jokes. Not too great, but [laughs] . . .

DC: But occasionally . . .

EA: . . . or something a little funny, just to make people laugh.

DC: OK, but how did you feel women were treated in the department?

EA: Good. Yeah, yeah. Another worker. Another one of the guys. [laughs]

DC: So it sounds like, I take it your husband's fears were not warranted?

EA: Right. Right. Yeah, he finally got over that. Somebody come up there one time—after I went in Plant 8 and I was up on the third floor—and somebody in maintenance come over to me and said, "Are you really Slug's wife?"

DC: Is that what your husband was called?

- EA: Yep. People didn't know his name. He was called "Slug" all the time.
- DC: Any idea why he was called Slug?
- EA: I don't know. I did at one time. And then it stuck. And it stayed that way.
- DC: But they asked whether or not you were really Slug's wife?
- EA: Yeah! I said, "Yeah." And he says, well how in the hell do you get along with him? [loud laughs] I says, "Well, maybe he's different at home."
- DC: Did you ever find out what they were referring to?
- EA: Oh, I guess he's hard to get along with . . .

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

- EA: . . . gruff old bugger.
- DC: Oh yeah? Now was he an electrician at that point in time?
- EA: [shakes her head]
- DC: No? This is when you were first starting out . . .
- EA: This came—yeah—he worked right on the line when he first went in, and then he got more of the education, the schooling on it, and became electrician. I can't remember what year that was.
- DC: OK.
- EA: I don't—but he was when I was in there, when I went in, [faintly] he was electrician.
- DC: When you first moved into that drill press job, were there any black workers in that department?
- EA: In Plant 4?
- DC: Yeah.
- EA: [short pause] No.

DC: OK.

EA: There weren't very many people working there . . .

DC: Not a very big department?

EA: . . . either. No.

DC: How many people worked in there?

EA: Oh [pause] . . .

DC: Roughly.

EA: [pause] There were more, more in the division where I was, but where I was, in that division, I don't know, a dozen people maybe?

DC: OK. Not very many.

EA: No. Not very many.

DC: When you got bumped to second shift, how did that affect you?

EA: Well that was in, uh, uh, I wasn't in Plant 4 very long.

DC: Oh OK.

EA: And uh . . .

DC: Where did you go after that?

EA: . . . then—oh I went everywhere—I worked in every, every plant except the foundry. I think I got shoved around here and there and everywhere. But I was glad *afterwards*—that I—it was a lot more experience. I learned a lot more. I didn't like it at first.

DC: Would that be because you didn't have much seniority?

EA: Right! Right. Yeah. So it was almost like they had to give me a job because I'd hired in or what. I don't know. I had enough to stay there.

DC: Apparently enough to stay, but just barely.

EA: Just—yeah! Yeah.

DC: I don't know if you can trace the exact pattern if you had that many jobs, but can you remember where you went after that first drill press job?

EA: [pause] Yeah. Stupid me. OK, it's [Plant] 51 now. What's that called??

DC: [probably mistaking plant number for year] This would be like '53 or '54, maybe?

EA: [tentatively] This is '53—later than that.

DC: OK. You said you didn't work in Plant 4 for very long.

EA: . . . five. Yeah, like a year.

DC: OK.

EA: A little better than a year, but a lot of that time there was laid off. And I was off on a sick leave at that time too.

DC: Oh, you had sick leave?

EA: Yeah.

DC: What was wrong?

EA: Oh, I don't remember.

DC: Oh, OK. But it was—it was a long . . .

EA: I don't know. It was more than a bellyache [laughs].

DC: OK. Was it a week, or a month, or how much—how long were you out?

EA: [softly] I was off—I was off for a year.

DC: You were off for a year?!

EA: And I had to go back and have another operation after that time—I forgot what it was for now.

DC: So you actually missed a year of work on sick leave.

EA: I had—yeah—it's a wonder I even got back in.

DC: Yeah.

EA: And that's—and when I did get back, that's when they shoved me around here and there. They shoved me around thinking that I would quit. I swear that that's the truth. But I couldn't make it stick if I said so, you know.

- DC: This is after you came back from your sick leave?
- EA: Yeah, yeah. Because I didn't really have much seniority anyway. And then they tried to push me out, you know, get rid of me. And I was too stubborn. I would not—and my husband told me, "Don't ever refuse a job. Try it. Call a committeeman." But there's only one time I called a committeeman, and that's because everybody bugged the heck out of me, because I would not do it. And the job was too hard for me.
- DC: What job was that?
- EA: I don't remember. It was in Plant 8. I do remember that, for sure.
- DC: Was that still in the 1950s, when you called the committeeman? Or was that later on?
- EA: Oh, that was later on.
- DC: Later on. OK.
- EA: I don't remember.
- DC: Was your layoff in the '50s, or was that in the '60s, or later on?
- EA: The layoff was '58.
- DC: That was when you went to . . .
- EA: That was the big . . .
- DC: . . . to the junior high school.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: Yeah. But when you took your year off for sick leave, do you remember when that was?
- EA: [pause] That could have been '54?
- DC: OK. [talking over each other] The kids were still in school at that point?
- EA: I don't remember that a lot. Yeah. A lot of stuff I'm not remembering here [laughs].
- DC: That happens. Yeah, that's OK. What were some of the other jobs that you—that you did? You said you moved around. What were some of the other jobs that you did?
- EA: Oh, OK. Yeah, was starting on that one, was—huh, trying to remember what it was called: light unitizing.

DC: Light unitizing.

EA: Yeah. Cushy job. Oh man.

DC: Really?

EA: Yeah. And all women worked there.

DC: OK.

EA: And I had to work with two, two bitchy women that [laughs] hated each other, and I was—I couldn't talk to this one, couldn't talk to that one, because they hated each other, and I couldn't take sides. You know, I tended my job and [softly] and of course I didn't like it there, at that one.

DC: Now at your first job, you had a lot of interaction with the people around you.

EA: Yeah, I had fun!

DC: Uh huh.

EA: We played a lot. [laughs] I had fun. I really did.

DC: But in this case it sounds like there was no fun.

EA: Women! They're not easy to work with. At least they weren't—that bunch of women weren't. [laughs] And then they changed from—the plant, and it was over across Columbia—[Plant] 51 it was called, and they all went over there, and when I hired back in after a layoff, I could have signed up for that. And they had this little—that you could sit down on the job, stand, or whatever. But I didn't like the experience I had with the women being hard to work with, so I didn't sign up for it. So I went here and there and everywhere.

DC: Did you ever find out what those women were upset about?

EA: Just because they were women, I guess. [laughs] I don't know.

DC: What exactly was unitizing?

EA: Putting small parts together, packaging them up. Oh, we had one job [sounds like pistons]—had a little head like this, and this thing here, you couldn't touch it with our bare hands. You had to pick it up, because the salt on—would rust. The pistons had to be perfect. And [short pause] I forgot what other—little pieces. Those I remember because they were so fussy about them. But just small parts that had to be packaged up to send off to suppliers and stuff like that.

- DC: Do you have any idea why it was only women working in there?
- EA: [quizzically] Oh. No. Sit-down job. Easy. Cushy jobs. I'd rather work a little harder and work with the men! [laughs]
- DC: Fair enough. So you had a chance to go back to that plant . . .
- EA: Yeah, and I turned it down.
- DC: . . . but you chose not to. Where did you decide to go?
- EA: Wherever they sent me. And that's when I went everywhere.
- DC: Do you remember any of those other jobs? It doesn't have to be in order, necessarily.
- EA: One job I was at, oh boy, that was a hard one. I forget which plant it was, because I wasn't there long—[Plants] 8 or 9—or not 8. Or 9 or 15. And the engine thing—it was on a—not a spindle—on a line that kept moving, anyway. And one would get to you, and you had to push it up, put little things in it. And you did a lot of reaching and pushing. And the idea that I had to reach—the stuff was heavy, but the only reason they let me off of it was because I had to reach over, this high. That didn't bother me at all. It was turning the thing over on this thing, because it was heavy. And I didn't like that one.
- DC: All right. That one wasn't so good.
- EA: But I wasn't on it very long—a couple of weeks, I think. And then I went to another division somewhere, here and there.
- DC: Did they transfer you because you complained about it, or you were . . .
- EA: Uh, yeah, I guess, because—that's not one I go to the committeeman though.
- DC: That's not the one.
- EA: I don't know if they took me off because of that. Maybe—yeah, they took me off because of the reaching.
- DC: OK.
- EA: Which wasn't the problem. [laughs]
- DC: As far as you were concerned. It was the turning.
- EA: Right. Right.

DC: Go figure.

EA: Yeah.

DC: Did you pay any attention to the union in those first few years in the plant? You only used the committeeman once, but did you ever pay attention much to the union?

EA: Uh uh.

DC: OK.

EA: I didn't want to be a—they probably had a name for it. [laughs] And I didn't want to be known by that.

DC: A name such as?

EA: Somebody that's causing trouble. Not that—I don't know the word I want to use here.

DC: Do you mean you didn't want the company to think that you were . . .

EA: No. The people I worked with.

DC: Oh, OK. All right.

EA: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So if you had used the union, they might have thought differently about you?

EA: Could be. Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK.

EA: And the one time I did, it was because they kept yapping at me. "Get a committeeman." "Call a committeeman." "That's what they're there for." "I don't want to call a committeeman." Blah, blah, blah. [laughs] It was hurting my pride, I guess. I, you know, handled it my own way.

DC: Uh huh. Uh huh. When you first started out, you were in that job where you were, you know, having a good time, and joking around, and stuff like that. Where was your supervisor in all of that? The former boss, whatever?

EA: Oh, right there along with us! [laughs]

DC: Oh, OK. All right. Yep.

EA: Yeah, he was a fun guy.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: One of the best foremen I had. Yeah, for being a likeable person, and easygoing.

DC: OK. Did you guys get the work done?

EA: Yeah. Yeah. Get your work done. You'd get it done ahead of time, wander off somewhere and play a little bit. Go on back. But that didn't last too long, because they—in Plant 4 it worked. But in Plant 8, if you got a little extra time, you got more *work*.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: Ah me. Make it look like you're working. I'd rather be doing the work and get it done and just—I didn't want to hurry up and work like madmen. Goof around—what difference does it make? You know. Slow and easy. Take your own pace. Take my time doing it, and do it *right*.

DC: It sounds like . . .

EA: And use up the time. Don't be—try to find something to do then. The time goes quicker if you just keep busy all day long.

DC: Sounds like there were a variety of bosses then?

EA: Oh . . .

DC: There was one who would let you play, and there was another one who would find more work.

EA: [tentatively] Yeah, yeah. [more confidently] Yeah.

DC: You were about to say something else, it sounds like.

EA: Forgot what it was. [laughs]

DC: Um, did you ever find another job that you liked as much as that first drill press job?

EA: Uh [thinking pause], probably. Probably not! [laughs] I don't know. It's—I guess I had fun on the job anywhere I worked, because I liked the people. That's what I miss about not going to work. I miss the people. If I could make them laugh, I made my day. There were three of us women that ate lunch together, up there on the third floor. And these two are: "Did you read that in the paper this morning?" It has nothing to do with us, and they're just practically crying. I'm thinking, "OK. I got to come up with a joke. Get

these two a-laughing.” [laughs] Attitude. Why did they—why did they look for bad stuff. Grouchy.

DC: Could you remember the kinds of things they got upset about?

EA: Oh, stuff that didn’t even apply to them. Stuff—most of it was stuff that they’d read in the paper.

DC: OK, yeah.

EA: Whatever, I mean, we didn’t have war going on or anything like that. At this time. Not when I was in Plant 8. It was just, *gloomy*.

DC: So it would drag you down?

EA: See, one of them’s dead now. [laughs]

DC: You outlasted her.

EA: I don’t know where the other one is. I really lost track. She went—oh, there’s someone else that knows her and keeps in touch with her, so I always ask her about her. She says, “Oh yeah.” And she’s working.

DC: She’s still working.

EA: She’s working. [laughs] So more power to her. Not in the shop. I don’t know where it is, what the job is, but she’s still working. So that’s—I keep busy all the time. I just don’t get paid for it. Volunteers don’t get paid, but they can’t fire you either.

DC: There you go.

EA: [laughs]

DC: But it sounds like you got laid off for the model changeover every summer. OK?

EA: Early on.

DC: Early on. OK. Early on—that’s when you needed it, though, right? When your kids were still in school.

EA: Yeah, it was perfect! It really worked good for me.

DC: And then did you always get called back until 1958?

EA: Oh, uh huh. Yeah, yeah. But that was just perfect, to be off for the summer.

- DC: What kinds of things would you do in the summer?
- EA: Same old—do this and that. I used to know how to cook.
- DC: You finally learned!
- EA: And bake. I don't know how to do it anymore. Open up a can of something, and eat half of it, and go on and do something else. [laughs]
- DC: Did your husband get laid off for the model changeover as well?
- EA: No, he worked *full blast*.
- DC: OK.
- EA: Because he was on maintenance, and he worked the hardest. I mean he worked overtime then. That's when he did all of his overtime, and . . .
- DC: Did your family get ahead more financially when you, when you worked in the '50s?
- EA: Oh yeah. Sure. Yeah.
- DC: And what did you do with the money?
- EA: We spent a little more for clothes, and activities, and stuff the kids could do in school. Things that would cost a little bit, you know. [softly] Whatever.
- DC: Did your family ever go on any vacations?
- EA: We never did at all. Don't tell me about that! [laughs] One year, we were going to have a vacation. He actually put in for a vacation, and we were going to go—what year was that—OK, he had the stroke that year, '65—yeah.
- DC: Oh, so it wasn't until '65 that he even thought about a vacation.
- EA: Yeah. He wasn't—but when I was laid off, he worked full blast. And he wouldn't ask for a vacation. So it would have to be when I'm working full blast, that he would ask for if he did, but he never did. But he had put in for a month, and we were going to go to Nova Scotia [perhaps wrong Province?], take a train to as far west as we could get. My sister and her husband lived in Port Angeles, Washington, and we were going to go out there and see them. Now he had a stroke. So he says, "I guess I just wasn't supposed to take a vacation. And that was a mindset, that he never even considered it after that. He wouldn't go on a vacation.
- DC: Did he ever say why he didn't want to?

- EA: He just thought—oh, it was a cop-out. So he wouldn't have to do it. I don't know if he would have had a good time or not. We would go to Illinois in the summer for a week, and just see relatives. That's not a vacation. Vacation is where you get *away* from everybody. So, yeah, we never did actually go on a vacation together.
- DC: So no family trips with the kids or anything.
- EA: No.
- DC: No, OK. Yeah. Huh.
- EA: I'd take the kids with me and we'd do our little thing. So . . .
- DC: Um, how about—I asked you before, you said that you grew up in the Presbyterian Church.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: Did your family carry on with the church tradition in Pontiac?
- EA: [tentatively] Yeah, not necessarily. I went to Marymount, where I lived, which is a Baptist. [laughs] Now I'm a Methodist.
- DC: OK.
- EA: I'm just not any of those—just, be a *Christian*, not a denomination. I should find me a denominational church and go to that one! [laughs]
- DC: OK.
- EA: Yeah, I still go to First Church, because I've been there so long, but it's fallen apart. Not enough of us go there to keep it going anymore. I'm surprised we're still there.
- DC: Not a big congregation.
- EA: Yeah. Uh uh.
- DC: Did you go to church regularly in the '50s?
- EA: OK, in the '50s [thinks to herself, softly], uh, what did we do? Must have been, because there was only like—there was—'47—we moved out here in '47, and I wasn't going to church, at that time. When I did start going, it was at Marymount, which was right up on Walton at that time. Moved to a different place, but it's still—but I didn't care about staying a Baptist, for some reason. I'll tell you why, because they run down the Catholics, and I didn't believe in it. And I quit going there. Started going to First Methodist.

DC: Did you have friends who were Catholics?

EA: Must have—no, that wasn't, that wasn't the reason. My daughter turned Catholic, because she was going to marry this guy who was, and then they didn't, never did get married.

DC: Uh huh.

EA: But she doesn't—I don't know if she considers herself to be or not. Oh, not anymore she doesn't. No. Because he died a little while back. She is going to go—I forgot what it was now—when I was there to visit in October, this guy come around, knocking at the door, just before I was getting ready to leave. And when she first went to Milwaukee, he was the minister there, and she was—went to this little church. But he, he didn't remember that. She reminded him of it. And we had a nice chat. But she was kind of looking for a church to join, to go to. So maybe she already is. But she's, she's not dying of cancer. She's just going to stop breathing. She's had cancer a long time. And it's starting to affect the lungs and a little bit—but it's in the bones now, and when she started getting treatment for that, it seemed like it was helping all the rest of it better. And she's a fighter, and she's not going to go down until she stops *breathing*. And the doctor told her daughter that she's not going to die of cancer, that she's got the asthma, respiratory—so she's just going to quit breathing. And she ends up in the hospital in the middle of the night sometimes, because she can't breathe. She gets treatments for it.

DC: Does she have anybody there looking after her?

EA: Yeah, her daughter's living with her now, taking care of her, yeah. Thank goodness. And she did a turnaround. I mean, this—her kids made her sick in the first place, I think. Kay had been on drugs, but not anymore. I think, I think she's really got it licked, because she's made up her mind herself. She says, "I'm going to stay clean. I'm going to take care of my Mama." So—when Audrey's gone, will she go back to it? It's a scary thought. I don't even want to think it. Maybe not, because she would know that she wouldn't want her to. And I don't know—that stuff takes you.

DC: It's a hard position to be in for you.

EA: Uh huh.

DC: I was thinking back to when you got laid off in 1958.

EA: Uh huh.

DC: When did you first find out that the job wouldn't be there for you? The job in the plant?

EA: Well actually, I was surprised when I got called back. I think I didn't think that I would ever get called back to work.

- DC: After the year layoff, you mean?
- EA: Yeah, because I had started the next year at the same junior high. I had worked a day—I think I was on my second day, cleaning the . . .
- DC: [loud knocking noise] That's the door outside, yeah. They're always going in and out that door.
- EA: It's closer. I should have parked right out here!
- DC: Yeah, if you can get someone to open the door for you, it works. Otherwise you're out there in the cold.
- EA: Yeah! [laughs]
- DC: So, I think you told me before, but, um, let's see—did it ever occur to you not to look for another job when you got laid off?
- EA: Hmm. In '58?
- DC: Yeah.
- EA: Because [pause]—I don't know. It probably—it probably didn't cross my mind because I had been doing that school job.
- DC: Well, I guess what I meant is, before you got the school job, did you ever think, "Well, maybe I just won't work."
- EA: No, I think I'd have—I'd have found work somewhere, doing something, because the kids were old enough that there was no reason why I'd have to be staying home.
- DC: Right.
- EA: I don't like housework. I keep saying, get a job that pays—pay somebody else to do the housework. [laughs]
- DC: That's how you started out.
- EA: That's right.
- DC: So tell me more about what the junior high was like. You basically told me that there was a lot of foul language, but what was your job at the junior high?
- EA: Oh, OK. Now, let's see. The part I liked—the part I didn't like. I did—washed a lot of dirty pans and stuff. These sinks are this big, little deep.

DC: So were you in the cafeteria?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Oh, OK.

EA: And I worked out on the line during the lunchtime. I had my own little, little—not a wagon. A cart. I had frozen—OK, I had apples and cookies, and frozen ice cream bars. They were all a dime apiece, no matter what. And I think cookies might have been less. I don't know. But I had my own cart and I had to take inventory of what I had, and how much I sold, and the money and all had to balance out. And I turned it in. I enjoyed that, because I could yak with the kids, and you get to know them, and they get to know you. And I enjoyed that. But working on the lunch line, doing the thing with the money, they would—little pats of butter were supposed to be two cents. And they got these little pats of butter *hid*, and then the manager comes along, she's yakking at my shoulder, you know, and then, "Leave me alone. I need to take care of this." "Hurry it up. Hurry it up," you know. You can't hurry up everything like that. [laughs]

DC: So you're getting hassled on the lunch line?

EA: Yeah!

DC: Oh.

EA: I didn't like that. When she'd leave me alone, I did fine. But when I had my own cart, it was fine you know. So I didn't have to try and hurry them up—look at everything on there. You've got to know the price of everything.

DC: [hard to decipher, but alluding to catching would-be pilferers]

EA: Yes! Oh yes. Oh those kids were slick. [laughs] Try and talk you out of something. Blah, blah. So—I've got to go for a minute. Be right back.

DC: Um, let's see, you worked in the cafeteria then for a year, it sounds like.

EA: Yeah, yeah. And I had just started a second year, and I got called back to Pontiac Motor.

DC: Do you remember which job you got at Pontiac Motor when you got called back?

EA: [pause] Hum, hum. [pause] Must have been in Plant 8, on assembly. Yeah, OK. Third floor.

DC: How was assembly? How was the assembly job?

EA: [somewhat flat affect] Good, yeah. OK. I could keep up with it.

- DC: What were you assembling?
- EA: Fenders and hoods.
- DC: OK. Was that a physically difficult job?
- EA: And then . . .
- DC: Those are big parts.
- EA: Nah.
- DC: No, OK.
- EA: Because they're all hanging, and you just [chuh chuh sound] put the stuff on.
- DC: OK. All right. So you're just putting things on as they move on by you.
- EA: Uh huh. And there's a right and a left, of course. Tables are in between. And I had one job that a girl on this side, she was having a hard time doing it, and there was a little thing that—you hold the thing in here and, on one side you have to use your left hand to hold the gun, and the other thing is here. And she couldn't do it. But I was born left-handed, and they wouldn't let me stay that way in school. But I can use the left hand pretty good. So we traded sides. Did fine. She got along good and I got along good. [laughs] She's the one I didn't know she could read lips. And I didn't know it. And I worked for two weeks with her beside me, and I'd say something to her and I'd think, "Oh boy, what a snob! She don't even answer me." Blah, blah, blah. She walked out into the room where the people walked out here, slapped a guy on the face, went back out on the job. [laughs] She was reading lips.
- DC: Oh.
- EA: And I didn't know that she was deaf.
- DC: OK. All right. So she couldn't hear you.
- EA: She read my lips, and would carry on a conversation as long as she's looking at me.
- DC: Right, but if you spoke from behind her . . .
- EA: For two weeks this went on. I didn't know.
- DC: She never told you.
- EA: No [chuckling]. God oh man.

- DC: But she would actually walk across and slap somebody.
- EA: Yeah. I wonder to this day what he said. [laughs] But it wasn't, *proper*. [laughs] I can almost remember what she looked like.
- DC: That's very interesting, yeah. Now you said that, um, you were born left-handed but you weren't allowed to be in school.
- EA: Yeah. She wouldn't allow me to write left-handed. She whacked me with a ruler.
- DC: Really?
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: Oh my.
- EA: My mother was left-handed. So I would have been if she would have left me alone. But now I try—I think, well try it, you know. It doesn't work.
- DC: So you actually had to try to learn how to write with your right hand?
- EA: Yeah. I can't go back to it.
- DC: Hmm, how interesting.
- EA: But there are weird little jobs in the shop that I could do, and someone else couldn't.
- DC: Yeah.
- EA: So that worked.
- DC: So why did you decide to leave in '72? You said you worked . . .
- EA: Oh, I retired.
- DC: You retired. OK, you retired in '72, OK. And was there a reason why you decided to retire then?
- EA: I retired early, because my husband retired.
- DC: He retired.
- EA: He had been sick, and they—the doctor recommended him to retire. Worst thing he ever did to him.

DC: Really?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Why is that?

EA: [heated voice] He went home and he sat in a chair. He *retired. Nothing.* Got sick, he ended up in a nursing home. Of course he'd been retired awhile too—I shouldn't say that. But still, he wasn't active.

DC: So for—he was alive for twenty years or so, right?

EA: Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

EA: That wasn't good.

DC: So he just didn't have any—didn't develop any hobbies or any interests or anything?

EA: No. Uh uh. Sit in that chair, and if a dog—well we lived on a dead-end street. Moved on a dead end near a railroad track, and we're on the corner—a dog could walk by: "Where'd that dog go?" I said, "You want to know where that dog went, get up and go *look.*" He never asked me anymore, "Where did the dog go?" [laughs] He, he wanted to know what was going on, but he wouldn't put out any effort whatsoever to find out for himself. He just wanted to run me around.

DC: So what did you do during those years?

EA: [softly] Well, I don't know if I grumbled a lot [laughs]. [talking over each other]

DC: Were you as active as you are now?

EA: . . . well yeah, because I was running around waiting on him all the time. I'd go to the store—and I remember Audrey was here at that time—she had been home to visit for a week or two—and I come back from the store and he'd be yelling at me before I even got in the back door. "What took you so long?!" [laughs] That didn't go over good with me at all. I wouldn't even answer him [laughs]. Put me in a bad mood the rest of the day. [laughs]

DC: Sure.

EA: So that's what—a [?] kind of a life

DC: I'm sorry.

- EA: Yeah, so, but I'm not looking for anybody either, because I haven't got room under my kitchen table for somebody to put his feet [laughs].
- DC: Yeah.
- EA: I don't mind living alone. I prefer it.
- DC: Now before your husband retired, were you working the same shifts?
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: You were.
- EA: Yeah.
- DC: OK, yeah.
- EA: I had got enough seniority that I could bump and get back on days. He could have bumped somebody and went on the afternoon shift. But no way he would do that. He wouldn't do that for me.
- DC: Did he ever have any friends that he'd hang out with, and do things with?
- EA: No. Not really. Why, in the neighborhood. Yeah, I shouldn't say no, because the neighbors, we'd congregate around, in the evening. I probably wasn't working at that time either, maybe.
- DC: Would this be after you retired, or would this be earlier on?
- EA: Uh [pause] yeah, earlier on.
- DC: OK.
- EA: Yeah, and when the women would get the dishes done, in the evening, everybody would take their chair and go out, usually on the lawn between us—we had an extra lot on either side of us—and the guys would bring their chairs and would all congregate. Sit out there and yap. And we'd get our dishes done, we'd go out and join them until the mosquitoes chased us in. So, that was just kind of daily routine for awhile there. And it was enjoyable.
- DC: And the kids would be playing around the side, or whatever?
- EA: Yeah, yeah.
- DC: You mentioned that one reason you could justify working in the plant was so that you'd have more money for him to have better beer . . .

EA: [laughs] That's right.

DC: . . . better liquor and stuff. Did he drink a lot?

EA: Yeah.

DC: He did?

EA: Yeah. Some people would consider him an alcoholic, but I never did, because he could hold it. You wouldn't know that he had that much to drink. But he got to where his breakfast—he'd take about four ounces of whiskey [gulping noise]. Go to work. Lunchtime [gulping noise] – a couple of beers to drown it down. He'd have a big old fat hamburger, and that was that. [softly] Come home and, cook supper and do whatever. Yeah, he did—he put away a lot of booze. But he was big. He absorbed it all. He didn't carry on. If he'd get a little bit drunk on whiskey, he could get a little bit ornery, but if he got drunk on beer, he was a happy guy [laughs].

DC: What would he do when he was ornery?

EA: He'd just, be grouchy. Give orders [laughs].

DC: Did he give any orders at work?

EA: Never [pause] . . .

DC: But never what? I'm sorry?

EA: Oh no. I don't know. Maybe with the guys he worked with. If they thought he was hard to get along with, he must have been barking at them [laughs].

DC: Yeah, yeah. You were about to say something else—you said he never—I'm not sure what you were going to say.

EA: He never got mean. He never hit me or anything, you know. But when he'd get ornery, it was surprising—it did get scary a time or two, when he was drunk on whiskey. But usually, no, he'd just sleep it off. He'd get quiet. He didn't raise holy hog or anything like that, so I guess I didn't mind it too much. Leave him be. One Christmas Eve, though, I drove down to [?] and my son's girl—I mean when he was going with her at the time. This probably was after that time. But anyway, it was Christmas Eve, and no plans, he got drunk. He got home from work, three sheets to the wind. Sat at the kitchen table, fell off of the chair, laying on the floor. So I stepped over him and took off. And went back home, stepped over him, and went to bed. Laying there.

DC: He was still . . .

EA: I didn't try and pick him up—anyway, I couldn't.

DC: Was this after the kids were out of the house?

EA: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. You were about to say something.

EA: Yeah. [softly] Yeah, stepping over him that time. Another time—I forgot what it was already. It will come back. [pause] I don't know, I guess he probably laid there and woke up the next day. I can't remember, if I got him up or not. Oh, and he used to—[mumbles]—he wanted me—he wanted to push my buttons. He wanted to keep me under his thumb. He wanted me to wait on him. He would have trouble getting up from the kitchen table off of his chair, and I would take a hold of his belt, in back, to help lift him up, you know. And hang onto him until he'd go get in another chair to sit down, or whatever he was headed for—bathroom, bedroom, whatever. So I decided this day, I just stuck my nickels—knuckles—into his—he thought I had a hold of him. He come up off of that chair!

DC: Without your help?

EA: Yeah. He thought I was helping him. And I was *not* helping him at all. He just come up off of that chair. That old bugger. [laughs]

DC: So that would lead you to believe that he wasn't so incapacitated. Did he regain full use of his body?

EA: He could do—yeah! Yeah, he would lift and stumble around somewhat. He had—he had something he could grab a hold of—the back of the chair, and side of the door, the arm of the chair that comes around, another wall—everywhere he went in the house. If he couldn't grab a hold to steady himself—because his right leg didn't want to work right.

DC: How did he get along with your children?

EA: Oh they dealt with it. They put up with it. My son had a harder time. My daughter—why he favored her anyway. Everybody said that. Of course that kind of hurt the son, you know. So I tried to bend over backwards to help him out, you know. And Audrey understood that, and I would try to make up for it. But that's not what he wanted. He wanted his Father to be a Father to him. I don't think he ever really actually *felt* that. There wasn't—there wasn't the bond there.

DC: You mentioned how much it meant to you to know that your Father loved you.

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah.

EA: Yep. Yeah, I knew that. Oh, my Father. Hmm. All the time—I was trying to go back to sleep—if you get enough sleep, you don't go back to sleep when you wake up, four or five o'clock in the morning you lay there and think, "Maybe I'll go back to sleep." [laughs] You don't. So you think things. I was just thinking about that this morning.

DC: Were you?

EA: [softly] So, yeah. My Father the quiet man. And I was just thinking, did he ever talk to us? I don't know. I can't remember. We just—I mean, if he was ever to say anything to us that, that we shouldn't have done or something we shouldn't have said, or anything, it was that look. I mean he had that look in his eye. And we'd look at him, and make eye contact with him—"I did something wrong!" [laughs] But he never reprimanded us, never scolded us, never—I just can't remember him actually sitting down and talking.

DC: Even telling you a story about when he was young?

EA: No! That all came through Mother, or from his relatives, or whatever. And it then occurred to me, why did I feel so close to him, when he didn't talk to me about things, didn't explain things, why things were done a certain way. We just never questioned it. But that's the way it was done then. I talked to my cousin Mary, and every time I go home I go to my cousin's house, and we get to talking about "that's the way it was." We never questioned our parents. None of the other kids in the family, hardly.

DC: Might have pulled their hair, but . . .

EA: Yeah! [laughs] Oh my sister and I, we could get into some, actually fights. Ten minutes later we're arm in arm, walking down the lane. [laughs] Oh, yeah, she was, hmm. But I look back at it and, and I think now, with more understanding, why she was—had her little ornery streaks.

DC: Your Mother?

EA: My sister.

DC: Your sister.

EA: But I guess it was probably just with me. And now—I mean I was the cute little one. She was the straggly one with straight brown hair and hazel-colored eyes, and skinny little thing [laughs]. She had to have felt that.

DC: She would have been the baby until you came along too?

EA: Yeah. Even if it *was* only one year [laughs].

DC: One year. That's not a lot. I take that back.

EA: Not enough to . . .

DC: Not enough to know.

EA: I remember how mad I'd get at her. After she was in school, I had one whole year with Mama to myself. Everybody else was in school, and I was home with my Mother. And I was her little kid. And I would do my own little stuff, and be quiet, and I'd hear my Mother tell somebody else, "I wouldn't even know she was here until Esther come home." [laughs] She knew I was there then! I'd get mad at her, but boy I'd watch for her to come home from school that one year. I'd see her coming down the hill, and boy, away I'd go across the pasture to go meet her at the corner there. And we'd meet together and walk back home together.

DC: So there was a connection.

EA: Oh yeah. Definitely.

DC: Did you ever get your chance to go overseas, or do any kind of missionary work or anything like that?

EA: I've been on a couple of cruises.

DC: Have you?

EA: [Happily] Oh, through the UAW here.

DC: Oh really.

EA: I went to Alaska and I went to Hawaii *within* one year's time. Two cruises—I mean—of course now I'm out of money. I can't afford it. But then I've done it, you know, and I did, just, highlight. The biggest highlight I felt—oh Lord have mercy—I got to tell you this one too. I went to Branson, Missouri, with a group. I guess somebody's there right now yet.

DC: There's a group there now?

EA: Bonnie [Melton, retiree president]—yeah. [?] I would never—I was never going to live this down. But the day I—I got picked to come up on the stage with The Platters.

DC: Oh yeah.

EA: And I was picked as Platter Number 6—put a cape on me, blah, blah, blah, was talking and I was telling him—I forget what I was telling him. Didn't know how to talk into a microphone. He says, "Now talk to that thing." I was talking to him, instead of this—

and I thought, “I’m not used to this,” you know [chuckles]. But I decided, this is a show, and I decided—I asked him—I forgot what I said, but to show him my [softly?], I got my tattoo.

DC: OK.

EA: And I about scared him half to death. He thought I’d started to pull this up, because it’s right here on my side. And everybody on the bus was having hysterics [laughs]. He wasn’t going to pick me in the first place to come up on stage, and everybody on the bus was yelling at him, “Pick Edie!” He went all the way across the stage and pointed at some man down there, which he knew he wasn’t going to pick—because the reason he picked me, I swear, because I was sitting on the end of the row there, looking—fourth row—and I was like this. I was tired. I was ready to fall asleep. I’m sitting like this, and [laughs] – that’s why he picked me. I know that’s why he picked me.

DC: Just like you had to tell a joke to get people jump-started in the morning, he had to get you *going* there.

EA: [laughs] Oh man, and I thought—I didn’t have time to get nervous about it. And away I go. OK, I’m up on the stage with him.

DC: There’s a little stage ham in you.

EA: Somebody swore that I was a plant.

DC: Oh really.

EA: They thought I was somebody in the audience that they—they already knew that they were going to pick me, but it wasn’t so. It wasn’t true.

DC: Wow.

EA: So here I am up there showing him this tattoo, and that whole theater came unglued. Oh. Because—and tell him—what I did tell him, I said I was eighty years old when I had this done, and showed him the tattoo. Oh, they’re not—they won’t let me live this down [laughs].

DC: I can’t imagine why! [laughs]

EA: Oh, whatever possessed me. I don’t know. But I sure got a lot of laughs. That’s what I got it for [laughs].

DC: That moment.

EA: I had a lot of fun with that. Yeah, yeah. Oh man, and he did a good job. That guy’s a good artist on my skin [laughs]. Yeah, Blues Tattoos, down on Huron Street.

DC: Blues Tattoos?

EA: Yeah, and piercing. Body piercing.

DC: Do they get many eighty-year-old clients?

EA: No. He was going to put a—take a picture—well he did. He took a picture, and he was going to put it on the . . .

End of Tape II, Side A

Begin Tape II, Side B

DC: Oh well.

EA: Yeah, right.

DC: Can you think of questions that I haven't asked you that you thought I was going to—that I should be asking you?

EA: I had—I kept thinking—I almost called up Bonnie and asked her, "What kind of questions is he going to ask me?" But she probably wouldn't know anyway. But I never did.

DC: Well she's talked to other people who have interviewed—who have talked with me, I should say. But can you think of . . .

EA: I have no idea what—and I wondered, I thought, "What kind of questions is he going to ask me?" I said, "Well, I'll go and find out." I wasn't going to worry about it—think about having the correct answers, you know—I could tell him this or that. But I never did really think of anything, actually.

DC: Well, I've become much more interested in the lives, you know, that certainly go through the workplace, and go through the plant, and all that, but I learn an awful lot about finding out where people have come from, where they've grown up, and you know, what they were like before they got to Pontiac, and then what they did there. And that makes a big difference, I think.

EA: Oh yeah.

DC: A lot of people think that they're not going to be able to add anything, but . . .

EA: [laughs]

DC: . . . you know your life better than anybody else.

EA: True.

DC: And you know, if I were to ask you about Bonnie's life, well that wouldn't make as much sense, you know. So everybody has . . .

EA: She is one super lady. She is a *lady*. And she is a super person.

DC: When did you meet Bonnie?

EA: Here at the luncheons.

DC: So after you were retired?

EA: Yeah. I didn't know her before, that, no.

DC: You didn't know her before. OK, OK. Yeah, well she definitely makes this go, here.

EA: Ooh. I don't know how she does it. No way in the world I could do what she does. Man, yeah, and I missed her when she wasn't her for, when was it—we went to Anne Murray, to see Anne Murray. And I wasn't going to go see her, and she had an extra ticket for that, and she says, "Well, I'm not going to try and sell this. I'll just give it to you." And that's how come I went to see Anne Murray.

DC: Well that's good, but you missed Bonnie's company.

EA: Yeah, her and Margaret Weber.

DC: Do you know Margaret?

EA: Yeah, not as well as she does, but yeah.

DC: Because Margaret has voiced some interest in being interviewed, but every time I talk to her about it, she says, "No, I don't want to," and . . .

EA: Why?

DC: I don't know exactly, but if you ever do see her, to talk to her.

EA: Tell her, "Go for it."

DC: Well, you can tell her what it was like for you anyways.

EA: Yeah!

- DC: I'd really like to talk with her, because I know that, you know, she has been through a lot as well, and . . .
- EA: She and Bonnie are close, real close.
- DC: Bonnie hasn't been able to tip her off the fence, you know.
- EA: Aaoh. I'll have to go to work on her. How long are you going to do this?
- DC: Well, quite awhile, actually, yeah. Because I look out there when I go to the luncheons, and I see hundreds of people I haven't talked to yet. I've talked to nearly forty people . . .
- EA: Really?
- DC: Yeah, yeah.
- EA: How come I don't recognize you, seeing you at the luncheon?
- DC: I don't go every month.
- EA: I do.
- DC: Well, just because I teach on Thursday mornings right now.
- EA: Oh, oh. OK.
- DC: And also, I was gone on vacation once this summer for the picnic. I have kids that have activities, and you know, I come when I can. But every time I go I get seven or eight, nine names, and I follow up, but sometimes because of all my—I guess I can turn this off now . . .

End of Interview