Margaret Beaudry Interview
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Ms. Beaudry's Home
Waterford, Michigan
Transcribed by Marie O'Brien
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DC: . . . sometimes for sure. But anyways um . . .

MB: Is this your name, Dan?

DC: That's me. I'm Dan Clark. Yes, that's me. So yeah, by the end, I'll ask you if you can think of anybody else offhand that you think might want to talk to me as well. You might have some people in mind.

MB: Yeah. Have you talked to Bonnie?

DC: Not directly. I work with Bonnie, you know, she helps me coordinate things, but I need to talk to her herself some time.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, because she's my, one of my best friends. In fact, I don't think Bonnie realizes that I was one of the main ones in her life to get so involved in the union. Because when she came to work at Pontiac Motor, you know, women had a tendency to be, kind of, cutthroats. And I felt bad for her because she was young and, and pretty, you know, and us older ones, you know, they (not me but, you know, the other ones): "That blonde," and this and that, you know, that goes in the work force. And I just took her under my wings. I kind of liked her right from the start. So—and she was brand new. I think she was only nineteen or something like that when she came in.

DC: Do you remember when that was?

MB: Yeah, 19—I think '65.

DC: OK.

MB: Yeah, I think it was. Um, let's see—or was Mark born then? Yeah, that was—I think it was 1962.

DC: OK. But early '60s, anyway.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Well I'm going to start way back if you don't mind, before then even, and just ask you some questions about, you know, simple things like where were you born?

MB: In—I was born in Chatham, Michigan.

DC: OK. Where's that?

MB: In the Upper Peninsula.

DC: OK. All right. And if you don't mind me asking, when was that?

MB: That was December 24, 1925.

DC: OK, 1925. Wow. So had your parents been born in that area, as well, or had they moved to Chatham?

MB: Well, no, my Mother was born in the Upper Peninsula in Negaunee, and then my Dad was born in Manistique in the Upper Peninsula. So, but then they—my Mother came from a family that—she didn't have a Father. And so she went to this small town to work in a boarding house that my Dad's Mother and Father owned, and they were from Finland. And so that's how they met.

DC: OK. Do you remember when—let's see now, your Mother's family was from where, then, originally?

MB: Negaunee

DC: From Negaunee, OK. Had they come from someplace else originally?

MB: Yeah, her Mother came from Finland to this country.

DC: From Finland, OK.

MB: And her Dad—my Mother was, you know, she didn't have no Father. But he was an Italian. We know *that*. So I do have some Italian blood in me. Anyway, so, but you know, like Finlanders, they're mostly fair-skinned and—well, I'm fair-skinned but I have the dark hair and everything, you know. But I got my Mother's—my Mother definitely was Italian. She looked Italian. My Dad looked Finnish. So we have a little bit of Italian in us. But my Mother never really pressed that. She did not like Italians. So she didn't push us, because she didn't like her Father. She didn't—she felt that he left them, you know. And we laugh about it, you know, because we have so many friends and Italian friends, you know, but in—that was a long time ago so, you know, it was different. The world was different.

DC: What was it like growing up in Chatham?

MB: Oh, I mean, I had—well I had such a wonderful family. Our family had eight brothers and four sisters. So we were very, very close. And there wasn't very many social activities because it was just a small town. Just a—there was a bar there, and a restaurant, and a gas station, and a post office. That's the businesses that were there. So, you know, we knew

everybody that lived there. And most of them were Finnish. And some Swedes, too, you know, that came from the Old Country. We all say the Old Country. And so anyway, we were—we had this relationship with them people like we're brothers and sisters because every year in August, the first week of August, we all go home, from all over the country, to this little town. They have a homecoming. So—but right now it's getting to the point where a lot of my friends that I grew up with, they're gone, you know. But then my children go with, you know, and they kind of like the idea. They think it's great.

DC: Where were you in the order of your brothers and sisters?

MB: I was the sixth one.

DC: OK. Wow.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Fall right in the middle.

MB: Yeah. And I was the third girl. So anyway, yeah it was quite nice. My Mother, to me. [whispers] when I bring my Mother's name up, I cry.

DC: Oh, that's OK, yeah.

MB: But she was wonderful. And didn't have no life, really. But, oh, we loved our Mother [tery] very much. And the twelve of us, since my Mother's been gone, we laugh about it. I mean, it's a big joke with us because we get together once a year, all the whole family, which there aren't very many of us left anymore. But we got together and we laugh about it because we talk about stories during our childhood. My brother said to me one day, he says, "See, you know, when you talk about ma," he says, "you talk about her like as if you were her favorite child." And I says, "Well, I kind of thought I was." He said, "Well isn't that funny? I thought *I* was." And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" And he says, "Well I always felt, but I didn't say nothing to the rest of you, but I thought like I was the favorite." My Mother was such a wonderful Mother that she made each one of us think they were her favorite without letting the other one know it.

DC: With that many children. That's amazing.

MB: Yeah. Now that's a good Mother. No favoritisms at all, in twelve children.

DC: She must have been very, very busy.

MB: Oh, was she ever! Yeah, she was busy. Yeah.

DC: And what was your Father doing at that time?

MB: Oh, my God. My Father was never home. Wonderful Father. He worked in heavy

equipment, construction. So he used to get his jobs out of state, you know, they knew him. He was well-known for his ability to work with heavy equipment. And so, oh he's worked in every state in the union, I think. And then my brothers followed him when they were young and they became heavy equipment operators. In fact, my one brother worked on the Hoover, on the Hoover Dam. Almost got killed. You know, coming to the edges and things like that. So, you know, I had a good life. But poor. But I know what it's—talk about being poor! I came from *poor* family, but we had so much love that we didn't even think nothing of it. You know, that's the way it was in our family. And I was telling my son, I can't remember what I asked him if he—he said, "I'm hungry ma." I have a son living with me now, he just came from Seattle to live with me, and his son. So, I've been alone for eleven years, and he's back home with me, which I'm really happy about. And he asked me for something and I told him that there's some leftovers. He said, "I really don't care for the leftovers." I said, "Oh, honey, you are so different than Mother." You know, and I started telling him a little story. He was very interested. I says, I said, "You know," I said, "sometimes my Mom would say, 'well now kids, if your Dad don't get home tonight or in the morning, that I don't know what I'm going to have for you to eat tomorrow." You know, I mean, and we didn't think nothing of it, either! I mean, we didn't, we just figured, "oh, my Mother's going to figure out something, 'cause she always did." And I'd say, "Well ma, you don't have to worry about me 'cause I'm invited to my girlfriend's house. So you can eat my share." My Mother went without many times. Yeah. So it was, it—but, you know, I look back at it and I think every bit of that part of our living made us all good. Because all my brothers and sisters, I mean they all did well in life. Of course, I thank General Motors. I mean who would ever dream that I would ever have gotten such a good job? You know, as I did, and worked forty years for them and have such a wonderful pension and—of course, because of the union. That's why. Yeah, I'm sure that women wouldn't of never been able to work in those places if it wasn't for the union. You know, because they fought for equal rights, you know.

DC: We'll be talking about that really soon, I'm sure. I was wondering, did your family have a garden or anything like that to help supplement your Father's income?

MB: No.

DC: Didn't do that, OK.

MB: Oh, no. And you know, it was really funny them days. People were very proud, you know, they didn't want to ask for help, either. But boy, my Mother said, my Mother used to say this, and I feel that way, too, I really do. She says that, "It is a *sin*," she says, "to have so much pride that you won't ask for help when you have children's mouths to feed." So she *did* go and try and get help when my Dad was away for so long, and then, but when my Dad came home, then we always had—he came home with these earnings, you know, which weren't that much. But at that time, you could do a lot. Anyway, but she, oh they just would not, I mean they were very strict about how, how they dealt this stuff out, we called it. What did we call it? Relief. It's called welfare today. It was called relief then. But my Mother did—they never gave money out for food or anything. Now why, I think it's because of the wages my Dad made. They didn't take into consideration there was

twelve of us. You know what I mean? It was just that my Dad made good money. But with twelve kids, you know, it don't. . .

DC: You would've been really young but you would've been growing up during the Great Depression.

MB: It was, yes, I did.

DC: Yeah. Was your Dad working regularly during the Great Depression?

MB: Yeah.

DC: He was.

MB: Yeah.

DC: All right.

MB: Yeah. And so anyway, but, like I said, there were times even though he was away from home and the job was over with, but he didn't have money to come home. See?

DC: Would he send money back?

MB: Oh yeah. And it was just—I really don't know the story, but my Mother was always saying, "If your Dad. . . ." You know, I always remembered that. "If your Dad don't come home pretty soon," you know. But there was no ways of communicating, either, between my Mother and Dad. You understand, there was, we didn't have no telephone. Didn't have no electric lights, either. No indoor bathroom. [laughs] That stuff, we—I mean, this is what my grandson loves for me to talk about, see.

DC: Did you have any kind of lamps? Did you have gas lamps or anything, or kerosene?

MB: Well, no, we had kerosene. And I remember that, I can't—I remember when we got our first gas lamp. Was that wonderful! It was like electric lights. I mean, it really brightened up the place. But other than that, we had only—we didn't even use candles. My Mother was afraid of candles burning.

DC: Oh OK, burning things down.

MB: Yeah. And so she, we had the kerosene lamps. And then we had wood stoves, you know, I mean, that's how we heated our place. I always tell the kids, when we got up in the morning we would—my Mother made our comforters. They had workshops where you could go and make comforters and things to keep warm. You know, it was really cold. It's not like that anymore, like it used to be when I was young. My God, some of the mornings we'd wake up and we couldn't get out of the house until my Mother would get a path, you know, and the boys would help her, to get out of the house. Because it would be a big, big

storm, you know. And then we used to have to help her to dig the wood out from underneath the snow banks. Oh, it—it's fun to talk about, but it was rough then! But we didn't know any better. So, you know, it was just the way of life.

DC: How old were you when you started pitching in like that?

MB: Oh, I was probably around seven. Six, seven. Oh, we all worked together. We had our chores.

DC: What kinds of chores do you remember having?

MB: Oh, my God. I used to haul wood, you know, like we—when we would buy a load of wood and it would be—we didn't have driveways like we have now, so they would leave it on the high, you know, the main drag. And we would have to carry that. And they would be these big chunks like this and we all took turns with my Mother to saw them, so that they would be short. Yeah, but it was, and we didn't think nothing of it. And anyway, it was rough. I mean, with the weather and everything, you know, the elements were against us not only because we were poor but, you know, the winters were bad, you know. And—but we always managed, you know.

DC: Did your family ever consider moving from Chatham?

MB: Well my Dad always come home, he'd always be looking into a better way of life for us. But, whoa, we always used to tell my ma, "He's going alone, we're not going!" My Mother went along with us. "My kids don't want to go." You know, we did not want to. He had many chances to move to different states. Oh, we didn't want to. That was our home, you know. It felt like we was leaving our family because it was such a small area.

DC: So did you still have extended family there?

MB: Oh yeah. Yeah, now, yeah that's . . .

DC: Yeah. They're there now, but at the time did you have aunts and uncles and . . .

MB: Oh yeah. Ah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: How about cousins, did you have . . .

MB: Oh, piles of them. Yeah. Yeah. So, oh yeah.

DC: What about school?

MB: Well, we lived right by the school. It was so funny because we just could just walk, from my house now, like maybe on the corner was the school. You know. And so that was no problem. But then we went to high school, we caught the bus at this school and then went to the high school, which was in Eben [just west of Chatham], another little, small little

town. But that school is still—well, the school was torn down about, I think about ten years ago. And they got a beautiful school there now, you know. In fact, one of my teachers, he was very intelligent person, worked on the atomic bomb. Was very secretive then, but it came out. We wondered whatever happened to him. But because of his intelligence that he said he was resigning, but the government came, you know, they had their ways of doing it; keeping things secret. And yeah, and he worked on the atomic bomb. I happened to bump into him one time for one of these homecomings that we had, and—I guess there was something about me that made me special with him, but I didn't realize it at the time. Because he made his way to speak to me, you know, out of all the whole—the whole town was loaded—it was loaded then, it's not so loaded now, but at that time. He found me to ask me how I was doing and he invited me to come and visit him, me and my husband and my daughter, to come visit him. He said he would like for me to read a scrapbook that he had of the many things that I was—I was in his scrapbook, and one of them was that I was very popular. [laughs] And I used to get—during the class—and I was at the top of the class, too, so it wasn't because I wasn't at the top. Maybe that was why he took notice that I *was* at the top of the class. And he was our science teacher, and biology. And anyway, he had gotten a few of the notes that somebody had slung across the room, you know, we had just small classes, too, you know. I think there was twelve of them in my class, when I graduated, you know. So that's not a very big class! My son had four hundred and six hundred graduated with, you know. Yeah, so he had a scrapbook for me to see, but I never did see it. And he's been long gone, you know. But I never did see that scrapbook, but he said I would be interested in reading some of it.

DC: It's too bad you didn't get a chance to see that.

MB: Yeah, I was sorry I didn't. He lived in Ohio. After the war, him and his wife moved to Ohio. I don't know what for, you know, I never did follow through. I had my own family. But anyway, it was very interesting.

DC: What about in the summers, when school was out? What did you do then?

MB: Oh dear. We had a recreation program, you know. And there was this one fellow that—he was our first recreational leader. We thought that was so great. That was, that was from the, you know, through the state. Or the county, I don't know, really, what it came from. But it was for the children that, you know, didn't have nothing. We didn't have nothing, no social activities. So he was our leader and he made arrangements, which he got paid from the state. He was a college educated. And he made up programs. We had horseshoe, horseshoe tournaments. We went to a place in Au Train, where there's this beautiful Au Train Lake that went into Lake Superior, and he made arrangements. I don't really know how we got there—we went in cars. So evidently, people from the—the townspeople must've donated their cars because I always remember I rode in the car he was in, the recreational leader. And we used to go swimming and we used to take tap dancing lessons and I always sang. In fact, you heard me, I was at the picnic. Yeah. And that was my doings, getting that singing in there.

DC: I noticed you were running the show.

MB: Yeah. So anyway, he—we used to take a—they had a lady that came in from a larger city, which was Marquette. And they came to our school once a week on the weekends, on Saturday, and gave tap dancing lessons. Well, I—they were very cheap, but we were given the opportunity to take tap dancing lessons. But I couldn't afford them. My—me and my brothers and sisters couldn't afford none of those things, you know. But I used to go with my girlfriend when she took the lessons and I could watch, but I couldn't [?]. But I learned. I came, I came back home and I taught all the other girls. Oh, in fact, I was doing a family reunion, I mean, a retirement from a girlfriend that was my best girlfriend. She was the postmaster. And she retired, and I went to her retirement with her son asking me to get some kind of a program together and bring back some memories to his Mother, you know. And I went back there and I brought my karaoke machine and bought her a pair of tap dancing shoes from a garage sale and we got up there and even tap danced. And we had made up a song in our child, during our childhood that was a number one hit in that small town, you know. I brought up there and I had sang it on a tape, and she joined me because she remembered but had forgotten. And her children, oh God, they thought that was just so great, because those were stories about their Mother that they didn't know about. I even brought up the stories. We tap danced in a theater and she was always blowing bubbles with her bubble gum. And we had, we were warned from the recreational leader that, "Now, when you're up on that stage, no gum in your mouth!" and stuff like that. Evidently, she must have forgot to take the gum out, because while we were tap dancing up on the stage, she was blowing bubbles. And one of them came real big and it fell, blew out on her face. And she had forgotten about that, too. Oh, she just got the biggest kick out of that. So, in fact, her son took a video of it, you know, and we get to look at that when we go home, every once in awhile, you know, at her retirement.

DC: But it sounds like that summer program really made a big impression on you.

MB: Oh, it was great. It was so great. I mean, you know, there's different—all over the Upper Peninsula, there's so many, much distance between, you know. It's kind of like—the people up there call it God's country and I call it no man's land, because I, I wanted to get away. I've been here since I was sixteen.

DC: Sixteen, oh my gosh.

MB: Yeah. So I came to live with one of my brothers.

DC: OK. I was going to ask you about this migration, because some of your brothers and at least a sister or so would've been, you know, leaving home I'm sure, while you were still there.

MB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: Where did your siblings go when they . . .

MB: My sister moved to Pontiac. And she was the oldest sister.

DC: Your sister moved to Pontiac, OK. OK, and she's the oldest sister, but where was she . . .

MB: She's number one.

DC: She's number one. OK, she's the oldest and your oldest sister.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. All right. And why did she move to Pontiac?

MB: Well, she was married and they got married and, of course jobs were not available then.

DC: Did she marry someone from the Upper Peninsula?

MB: From the, yeah. She did. And anyway, she—he came down here because he had an aunt and uncle that were living here. And he, so he came here to get a job. He got a job at Pontiac Motor, believe it or not.

DC: He did.

MB: He did, yes. And . . .

DC: Do you have any idea when that was?

MB: Let's see. OK, I'm trying to think now. [pause] My sister was ten years older than me. OK, so I must've been ten, she must've been sixteen. She must've been sixteen or seventeen when she got married. So, how would that be? If she's . . .

DC: Well that would've been the early 1930's, then.

MB: OK. That would've been in '35.

DC: OK. About '35?

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK, so maybe she moved down to Pontiac when she was about twenty? Does that sound right?

MB: Yeah, that sounds right. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. All right. And he got a job at Pontiac Motors.

MB: Uh-huh.

DC: Because he had an aunt and uncle who had been down here.

MB: Yeah.

DC: There's always somebody who left first, and you got to keep questioning to figure out who that is.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, and that was my sister.

DC: OK. All right. How about some of your other siblings?

MB: Well, then my brother George moved down here. He, now he would—Bertha was the first one, Frank was the second, and George was the third.

DC: And George moved down here, as well?

MB: Yes. He moved down here, and he—where did he get it? I'm trying to figure out where did he get a job? It was with some construction. But he was quite young. My brother George was, my brother George was working when he was—he was working with my Dad in, in—you know how you didn't, there wasn't those laws against child labor or anything, see, then. So he just worked. He was a working fool. I don't really remember where he work—Oh! Oh, there was, in that small town of Chatham, there's called— we always called it the Experiment Station. But it belongs to Michigan State, and it's agriculture. And that's where my brother George worked first, and he learned how to run the equipment, you know. He was just a kid. He used to go and do it for nothing. He loved it, you know. And then, so then when he got, I think—now if my sister was twenty, that would've made him—that would've made Frank eighteen, and that would've made my brother George sixteen. So he came down here and he got work with some construction person through somebody that my brother, my sister and brother-in-law's relation, got a job through that.

DC: OK. So we got that job. And so, if I heard you right, you said that by the time you were sixteen you were ready to get out of Chatham.

MB: Oh yeah. Before then. Because I came—in fact, I came down here to live with my brother when I was fifteen, for the summer. And I loved it, but I went back. And then I came back the following summer and stayed, and went to work.

DC: And stayed for good, then, at that point?

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. So why were you so eager to get out of Chatham?

MB: Because I didn't like small town. [laughs] I used to sit and dream, you know, I thought what is my life going to be like? But it was not going to be in Chatham. It was *definitely*

going to be away. And I really did, I loved this—I always felt that, I used to dream that I was going to be in show business. But, of course that didn't pan out, you know, you have to know somebody to get into that. But it was a dream of mine. And I was very active in everything that went on, you know? I was involved with everything that kids did and, of course my dancing and my singing was the main thing. And then we always went to—and there was also another place, a real, I always thought it was such a beautiful place. It was for older people that needed health—I don't know what they call, these nursing homes. Only this was, oh God, it was a beautiful place. And I can't remember how many rooms it had, but people from all over used to come there to live when they couldn't take care of themself. I didn't even know of anything. This was when I was younger. We used to go there—I used to go there and programs and sing for those older people, and dance. You know. And, oh they liked me. And they even had—some of them couldn't even talk English, you know? And. . .

DC: Were they from around the area?

MB: No, they different—all over, you know, because most of the people up there were Finnish and these were people that had a different accent and could hardly speak English. But they had money, but yet, you know, I suppose couldn't take care of themselves. They were old when they came there. Some of them could still walk. Yeah, I always remember this beautiful place. It was always fenced in. It wasn't far from my house. And it was a big, white building and they had a big circle driveway. They had gates, you know, to get in. And they had a big, from the building to the road, they had a cement walk. Well, we never had cement walks, you know? Ours was gravel. And then they had a gate there. And there was a blind man that was staying there, and he had a cane and he had a dog. And oh God, I love dogs. And it was a big German Shepherd. And he used to come every morning and walk, get out with his cane and it would tap, and he would be singing. And it was a foreign language. And he tapped that little cane to the—for his, you know, timing. And he couldn't see, now he was totally blind. But the dog was with him. And I used to go, I could hardly wait till that morning. It was early in the morning and I'd get up and I'd not let nobody know I even got up, get dressed, and I was out. I would sit there at the gate and listen to him. And I *loved* that dog and that dog, he was a watch dog, you know, really. But he loved me, too. And my Mother would, if somebody would say, "Where's"—oh, my nickname was Mikey, they, everybody called me Mikey, not Margaret. And everybody would say, "Where's Mikey, she's not here!" And my Mom said, "Oh, she's probably over there talking to that dog!" And the guy couldn't talk, but he would stand there long enough, still, you know, tapping his stick so the dog could see me and I could put my hand through the fence and pet him, you know.

DC: Why did they call you Mikey?

MB: My sister, the one before me, she had a kind of a speech defect. And she couldn't say Margaret, so she named me Mikey and she named my brother Frank Feinkie, and she named my brother George—I don't know where she got this from, but she got it from—Gergie.

DC: Gergie, OK.

MB: Uh-huh. And we still called them that until they died, you know, those two. And my sister, the oldest sister, her name was Bertie. So there was always a "tee" at the end, did you notice? So I—and then, but my brother Reno—he was before her—she didn't call him Reno, she called him Nino. And then, of course, the ones below that, by that time she could talk. I mean, it just kind of grew . . .

DC: She grew out of that.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. So anyway, because we laugh about that. She comes and sees me every, every year. In fact, she comes back with me at, in August.

DC: Up to Chatham.

MB: Yeah. To live with me.

DC: What did you do in Pontiac the summer when you were fifteen. Your first trip down to Pontiac, what did you do?

MB: Well, you know, I was quite, I was—people thought I was older than what I was, you know? I mean, I don't know what it was, but they just did. And I just lied my age. And I got a job. And there was a, on this—I lived on Norton Street and, where my brother was, and I applied for jobs all over. But I got the first job, was on the corner of Norton and State Street. I think that, I don't know what building is there now. There was a drive-in restaurant called Scrib's [sp?]. Scrib's Drive-in. And I got a job there. And, God, they used to—Scrib's is a kind of a prominent family in Pontiac. I don't know if you remember the name or not. But they used to own that bowling alley, too, over here on Telegraph. And I don't know what the name of it is now. But they had a big restaurant, and it was a bowling alley and people used to go there and eat.

DC: What did you do when you were there?

MB: When I was on the corner there, I—I did everything! I mean, I—I laugh because the way some of these people where you go into a restaurant, you know, little small places, it takes forever for them to wait on you. And I used to take care of that whole place, and it used to be loaded with—and then, and then another older lady used to come in and help me at noon. But they—I unlocked it and everything. Can you believe that? At fifteen. I wouldn't dare, I wouldn't let my daughter out of the house. Here I am away from home, you know! But see, that's the way it was, we kind of—you know, I think from our childhood—I loved my childhood, but yet from my childhood, I was very protective of my own kids. I wasn't going to let them—but see, we kind of, my Mother had to trust us. And she had no reason not to. We just did exactly what she told us we should do. And I had my first job, really, when I was, when I was nine years old I had a steady job.

DC: What was that?

MB: Babysitting. Yeah. Taking care of other people that worked, you know. . .

DC: At nine years old?

MB: Yeah. Oh yeah, and I, and everybody wanted me, too. I was very good. Yeah, I—we just—well that's because that's the way we were brought up. In order to keep a job you had to do your job, you know?

DC: Right. Nine year olds today *have* babysitters, they don't do the babysitting.

MB: Oh, no, I wouldn't—and I'll tell you, nobody babysat for me. If anybody babysat for me, it was somebody in the family, you know, and I wouldn't, I never, never would. I had the lady over here, when I was working at Pontiac Motors then. See, I had the two families, you know, I had the daughter, she was sixteen years old when I had a son. She was in Michigan State when I . . .

DC: When you had another.

MB: Yeah. And so they were quite young when I'm still working at Pontiac Motor. And I had the lady across the street come in from the time I left to go to work, for an hour and a half, because my husband left to go to work, so there was an hour and a half that she would come across from across the street and the kids had already eaten and everything, but she'd be with them.

DC: That was later when you had young children of your own.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Yeah. We'll sneak up on that again, I might even ask you that same question again.

MB: Yeah.

DC: But anyways, after your summer working at the restaurant, you went back up to Chatham.

MB: Oh yeah, I did. Yeah.

DC: And how did you feel going back to Chatham at that point in time?

MB: Oh God, I hated it. [laughs] I hated it. I said, well I'm not staying here, you know. And but anyway, but don't forget that I had a boyfriend that was older than me, but he went into the war, see? And that, because he wasn't there, either, that made it so that I didn't want to be there.

DC: So he was a boyfriend from Chatham?

MB: No, he was from Munising.

DC: From Munising, OK. Where did you meet him?

MB: At a dance. Yeah, I snuck out. My Mother knew it, though. She used to say, "You better be back before your Dad comes home," you know. But my oldest brother used to sing with a band, not get paid, but because he was good friends with the band leader and he loved to sing, good singer. And so I would know when he was going to sing and I'd tell my Mother, I said, "Ma, I'm going to go and hear Frank sing." She said, "Well, don't let Frank see you, because he will really get mad," and you know, because the older kids kind of watched over us younger ones. See? And I'd say, "Oh, he won't see me but I got to hear him!" And I used to go. And then, so there would be other people there, and like I said, I was, I thought I was as old as my brother! I felt like I was. But I look back at it now and I know I wasn't. But anyway, oh yeah, my Mother would wait for me to come home. She said, "Well how did he do? What did he sing?" And I'd tell her, you know, "Oh, the people just loved his singing, ma! Wish you could hear him!" She said, "Well that's all right," she says, "You better get upstairs before your Dad comes home," you know?

DC: So these would be big trips out for you then.

MB: Oh yeah. [laughs] Uh-huh. And I met my husband, you know. He used to be there and he'd talk to me and he was very nice. But he didn't know I was, he didn't know I was too young as I was.

DC: So this boyfriend who went to the service became your husband?

MB: Yeah. Oh yeah.

DC: Oh, OK. Uh-huh. So what branch of the service did he go into?

MB: He was in Air Corps.

DC: Air Corps. All right. And when did he—did he enlist or get drafted?

MB: Oh no, he enlisted. Enlisted and then that was when he enlisted, I didn't want no part of it up there. That's when I came down here. Yeah, and then I went to work.

DC: So you came down, did you finish the school year after you went back up?

MB: Yeah. Yeah. And then, I came down here and then I went to work at Neisner's. Yeah.

DC: Neisner's?

MB: Yeah, that was a dime store. That was competition for Kresge's.

DC: Oh, OK. All right.

MB: And Woolworth's. You've probably heard of that.

DC: I know Kresge's and Woolworth's. I hadn't heard Neisner's before. Yeah. How do you spell Neisner's.

MB: N-E-I-S-N-E-R-S.

DC: OK. And so what did you do at Neisner's?

MB: I worked in the stock room. I was the helper for the main, main lady. It was a lady that was the main manager. And I worked, and it just so happened that we became very good friends because she was from the Soo [Sault St. Marie], and that's in the Upper Peninsula.

DC: Sure, oh yeah.

MB: So we even got together and we lived together. You know, her husband was in secret service, and she's a lot older than me. She could've been my Mother, you know, but we were very good friends. And her husband was in the secret service so she didn't really get—she couldn't get in contact with him at all during the war. And so I lived with her. We had apartment together, real nice apartment. We lived in a doctor's house and we worked at the same place, and she taught me everything about the business. And when she left, and I, after I got married and went back home to live and came back, they hired me as the main person.

DC: All right now, you just went through a whole lot of stuff here! You got married, and then you went back home. But when did you get married?

MB: Well, so when I was, when my husband—when I came down here, I'm working at Neisner's and I saved my money. I remember I was making nine dollars a week. [laughs] And I was working there and I saved my money and my husband was in Dodge City, Kansas. And he wanted me to come and visit him. And so I saved my money and made arrangements for the bus and went down to Dodge City, Kansas. Can you believe it, I was sixteen years old? [laughs] I can't imagine. I'm telling you this stuff now and I'm thinking, isn't that terrible?! But I felt like, hey, I just felt like I do now! I really do.

DC: Yeah. It's a different era.

MB: Yeah! And you can see why my grandson is interested in my stories. Because he can't hardly believe some of the things I say! And anyway, so I went down to Dodge City, Kansas. And I mean, I'm thinking, gee God, I can't imagine one of my kids at fifteen going to Dodge City, Kansas and making the arrangements. I made them.

DC: Did you go on the bus?

MB: Yeah. Oh yeah, Greyhound bus. And it was so funny because, you know, you had a hard

time getting them because that was—the soldiers went from place to place, too, during the World War II. Not only on the troop trains, but the buses were loaded with soldiers. So, but when I got on, there wasn't very many on the bus. And it was really funny because I'm traveling on this bus, and you know, that's a long way to go from here to Dodge City, Kansas. And then we'd stop to eat and, you know. But somebody else would get on the bus, wherever you would stop there was always somebody getting on the bus. And almost all of them soldiers. And they always had preference. The civilians, we had to wait for the soldiers. But like I started out, there wasn't many on the bus from Pontiac here. And anyway, we're on that bus and I can't remember what day it was, how long it took me to get there. But my husband, which was my boyfriend at the time, he knew I was coming. [music starts in the background] Oh gosh. [music stops] Yeah, I got my stereo back there and it's wired in the basement and my kitchen and all over. And I put that tape on because he was here yesterday and we sang the song and I put it on for my son to hear. Well the rest of the tape is empty!

DC: Oh OK, so then it just came back around.

MB: It just kept going and going and going, and it turned around. So I was saying, where was I?

DC: I think you were talking about, still heading out to Dodge City.

MB: Yeah, and oh, and so I'm on this bus and, you know, they always gave you pillows on the bus. And they would put them overhead, you know. And nobody was sitting in my seat, so I took the two pillows and put them behind me and fell asleep. Well, when I woke up, that bus was loaded with soldiers. There wasn't very many civilians on it. And this guy was sitting next to me, this soldier, and I only had one pillow. So evidently, he must've taken that pillow. So anyway, and he was sleeping. And so we were going along, but I knew it was almost time for us to stop for something to eat or something, you know. And anyway, when we stopped, actually I kind of looked at him. I thought, "God, does he look familiar!" But I thought, oh, it couldn't be someone I know, it can't be. But he did look familiar. And he's sound asleep. So another soldier that might've been his friend, I don't know, but—poked him and says, "Time for breakfast," or whatever it was. And, of course I wasn't going to wake him up, because I figured he's tired and he was a soldier and you had so much respect for those soldiers that, you did, you know, you just did those days. I mean, everybody was real good to the soldiers, you know, they were working for us. They were keeping us alive, we felt. You know how we were—very, very good to the soldiers. Anyway, so he got off the bus and he didn't say nothing, you know, and he just got off. Well then, see I was next to the window and he got off first and he went, and then I kind of waited until . . .

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

MB: . . . so I waited until all of them got out, and then I went out. But I didn't stay long and I got back on the bus. And I had, you know, personal things there and I didn't want to lose track of them. So I went to sit where I was sitting. Well this guy gets back on this bus and he comes and sits next to me, and I could not believe it, it was my husband's best friend!

DC: Oh really?

MB: I *could* not believe it! I mean, it was, it was, that's amazing. You could never have, I just couldn't believe it. Anyway, and of course there was a big commotion and we just sat there and talked and talked, and he wanted to know all about my husband, because they were best friends. And they both joined in at the same time, but they got separated.

DC: So they were, wow, OK.

MB: But he was in Kansas at Fort Riley and my husband was at Dodge City.

DC: And they didn't know that.

MB: But they didn't know that, because they got separated. And so anyway, I was telling him where I was going and he says, "I'm going, I'm going with you. I got to see him." And I said, "Oh, no. That would be absent without leave. You can't do that." And so anyway, I talked him out of it. But he did want to see his friend, you know. And my husband—of course it was my boyfriend then—could not believe it when I told him, "Guess who rode. . ." I can't remember where he got on, but he had to get off at Fort Riley. And I don't know where he was, but that's where he got off, at Fort Riley, Kansas. And then, of course I went on to Dodge City. But my husband couldn't believe it, either.

DC: It's an amazing story. So what did you do when you got to Dodge City?

MB: So we got to Dodge City. Oh God, it was hot! Oh, my God, I could not *believe* that weather! What a change! And I thought it was hot here! That was in June. And so when my husband met me [muffled noise in background] Now isn't that, now that's nothing, either. But that's my grandson's watch and it talks. Anyway, so don't get scared of all these weird things! [laughs] Anyway, so my husband, when I got off the bus, I says, "Oh, you better get me a ticket. I'm going back home! I can't stand this." I could not. I mean, I couldn't breathe or anything, it was that hot!

DC: Right. Hot and humid, I bet.

MB: Yeah, why was it such a difference to me? I could handle it. But I was young then, I guess, I thought, "Oh God, I can't live like this," because it was hot on the bus and no air conditioning, either. See. I don't think they knew about air conditioning then.

DC: I don't think they had it at that point, not in buses.

MB: No. No. So anyway, yeah, so he says, "Well," he says, we"—you know, he was

disappointed. I wasn't even glad to see him!

DC: Too hot.

MB: I wanted to get back home. But anyway, we got married there.

DC: You did? OK.

MB: Yeah. And when I went, I knew I was going to get married. You know, I knew that. And so it was, that's another story, a stupid story. God, we went three days, you know, and he had to move for me. I lived with a doctor and his wife, had a bedroom in their house. It was a beautiful home. And I walk— he had to be at the base, of course, and I walked from their house to the courthouse. That's where we were supposed to get married. Did you know we went there three times and I didn't want to get married. I changed my mind. I had to lie my age. I didn't want to lie.

DC: How old were you supposed to be?

MB: Eighteen. And I was sixteen. Just before my birthday, in December—this was in June. And so, and I didn't—none of my family knew this, either, except my sister. She knew that I was getting married, because she—oh, she was so good. She was like a second Mother, you know, and she gave me all the pointers and, you know, about marriage. And so anyway, yeah, we went to the courthouse three days. Finally, we had to walk up three flights of stairs—there was no elevator. We walked up three flights of stairs. We got to the second landing, you know, where you wait. And on the third landing was the justice of the peace. So I got to the second landing and I told my husband, I said, "Oh, I can't go." Now what am I supposed to say? You know, I had to get a different date that I was born and everything. And he had it all written down, you know, because he was old enough, see? He was twenty-two. Twenty-two. And so anyway, I said, "Well why don't you go and I'll wait here for you and you go ahead and I'll be here on the landing when you get back." I wanted him to go get married, you know . . .

DC: Without you. [laughs]

MB: So he goes up the stairs and he gets to the door. He comes back, he says, "You fool!" He said, "I can't get married by myself! You got to come with me!" [laughs] Oh we laughed about that *so* much. Yeah, and so anyway, we got married. And I went to work at the Woolworth's dime store. They gave me a job just like I had at Neisner's.

DC: In Dodge City, this is?

MB: Yeah, it's in—in the stock room. And one of my jobs was to—at a certain time every day when things were slow and all the work was done, the stock that had come in I'd taken care of—I had to write on little souvenirs, "Boot Hill."

DC: "Boot Hill," OK.

MB: You've seen that show, probably. Do you remember that show, Dodge City?

DC: Yeah.

MB: Well, that was, that was—they had Boot Hill in Dodge City and it was a regular cemetery, like, where they said they died with their boots on, you know?

DC: Right.

MB: Yeah. Well anyway, it was real funny because I used to have to write "Boot Hill" on the souvenirs and had to deliver them to Boot Hill. And it was really fun, this one time when I went in there, I thought it was so great because you had to sign your name when you went into this place. And anyway, the guy that went in before me was Errol Flynn, which was a big-time movie star! And they said I had missed him, just a couple minutes.

DC: Oh my, my. So what was he doing there?

MB: Well, he just went to visit, you know.

DC: OK, a tourist.

MB: Yeah. Because you know he was in a movie, too, I think, where you know, he kind of was in a western and you know, they might've used Boot Hill. I don't know, you know.

DC: So you were the one writing "Boot Hill" on the souvenirs at the tourist place.

MB: Yes. Yeah, that's what I did when I was in Dodge City. And then of course, I lived there, let's see, I don't know how long I lived there. Well, I was seventeen when I came back home to Pontiac. Because he was shipped overseas.

DC: He was. Where did they ship him?

MB: To, he was in the Normandy Beach.

DC: Oh, he was? OK.

MB: Yeah. In Anzio beachhead. Have you heard that?

DC: Yeah, sure.

MB: And he went—was stationed in Corsica and when the war ended, the Germans surrendered. I can't remember what—well I got it written down. I can't remember all these dates. But he was supposed to go to the Pacific. So from there, he was shipped to Spokane, Washington at that air base in Spokane. And from there he was going to be shipped to Japan, you know, in that war. And—but that war ended. So he didn't have to

go. But in the meantime, I was working here.

DC: So you had—came back from Dodge City to Pontiac?

MB: Oh yeah, Pontiac. I went to work in the war. In fact, there's a picture of me up there. Not of me, but what I did. I put this up here for my grandson.

DC: Oh, let's see.

MB: I put it up there.

DC: Oh, you made the DUCK? [officially, DUKW, an amphibious vehicle]

MB: Uh-huh. I worked on that. And anyway . . .

DC: Wow that's interesting. That's the first picture I've seen of one. I've heard them described and read about them. Wow.

MB: Yeah, that's it. Yeah. And you know, it's really funny because I have a nephew now that was in the service and he retired, he's retired now from the service because he went right from school and he's a pilot. He's a big-time pilot. And he has, he flies to Boston and he told me, oh he just thought this was great, my nephew. He flew in, I think into Jackson here, and he then—from there he rented a car to come and visit me. And he saw this up there and he thought, "Oh, would you be interested!" Somewhere in Boston, Massachusetts every year, they've got all the ones that are left, these DUKWs.

DC: Oh they do? They still have them, oh ,OK.

MB: Mm-hmm. And they have some kind of a parade. So he said the next time if I ever go there. I said, "Oh, take some pictures and give them to me!" Because, you know, I had all kinds of stuff but I don't know—you know, through the years you lose that stuff.

DC: Sure. Well tell me what it was like coming back to Pontiac. How did you get that job?

MB: Oh. I lied my age. But I really shouldn't tell that because . . .

DC: No one's going to take anything away from you now.

MB: [laughs] Anyway, I went to work for Neisner's. Of course they hired me back.

DC: All right, back to Neisner's. All right.

MB: Yeah, because I left from there to go to Dodge City. So naturally, I got my job back and I was the head of the stock room then. But I went to put in my application because, you know, they were hiring women. And, good pay, you know. A lot better than what I was making.

DC: Better than nine dollars a week?

MB: [laughs] Yeah. Anyway, so I went there and I didn't know if they would, you know, hire me, but I went and they asked me how old I was and I said eighteen. And they said, "Well, we'll hire you. You get your birth certificate." I said, "Oh, I will." You know. Now see, it wasn't Pontiac Motors, it was GMC Truck and Bus. It was called the Yellow Cab.

DC: OK, Young Cab?

MB: Yellow.

DC: Yellow Cab, I'm sorry.

MB: Yeah, it was called a Yellow Cab then, that's what we called it, the Yellow Cab. And so they hired me and they told me to come in to work the next day. And so I went to Neisner's and told them I got a job in the war plant, and—which was fine, you know, they knew, you know . . .

DC: How did they feel about that?

MB: Well, they asked me if I would come and work part-time after I got through there, and I said I would. And I did. I had three jobs.

DC: Three jobs!

MB: I had worked there, full eight hours OK, at Yellow Cab. And then at night I would go and help them out in stock room until 9:00. And on the way home, I would stop at the Triple X and work maybe an hour if they needed me.

DC: What's the Triple X?

MB: Well that was a hamburger joint. And it was, it was really funny because—they don't have those kind anymore—and it was just a little tiny place, like a little box car. And it was right on Huron Street and it's kind of, you know where the Kentucky Fried Chicken is, or do you know where . . .

DC: I don't know. I'm not familiar with it.

MB: Pontiac, OK. Well anyway, that's not there no more but it was in that area. And, just before you get to Wide Track.

DC: OK, yeah.

MB: And on Huron Street. And if they needed me, they would, I would work for them for an hour if there was a lot of people in there. And they had these, they had hamburgers that

were—we, I always called it scrambled hamburgers. They weren't hamburger patties, they cooked it in a bunch and then they put it on the bun like a, almost like a sloppy joe but there was nothing on it but just hamburger. And you put whatever you wanted on it. And I'd work there for an hour and then I'd—I don't even remember, I don't think they paid me. I'd get my dinner. Yeah so.

DC: Oh OK. Work for your food.

MB: Yeah. [laughs]

DC: Wow, so you were busy.

MB: So I was busy, but that was because I was married and, you know, I knew that I just couldn't—I wasn't single and I couldn't go with the single crowd, so I said, "What else can I do but work?" And it was kind of social activity for me.

DC: And where were you living then?

MB: I was living on Norton Street then, in this doctor's house with this . . .

DC: All right, you still were there, OK.

MB: Where I started out, only she was gone but I was still there. Yeah. See, I went there to live.

DC: OK. All right. So how long did you work those three jobs?

MB: Let's see now. Well, I didn't, I kind of gave up on the restaurant part there. And, but I did go back to Neisner's whenever—I knew the manager and he really liked me and I knew the district manager, too. And I used to like to go and visit him. They almost became my friends, you know? And they were always glad to see me and, "Hello," you know, and made a fuss over me and I'd maybe talk to them for a half hour but they'd say, "Help, would you come and help in the stock room?" You know, that kind—and then I knew all the girls that worked there, too, see? So I always stopped there, every night when I'd leave Yellow Cab. I'd get off the bus downtown and then I'd go to Neisner's. Yeah.

DC: OK. Well tell me about the job at Yellow Cab.

MB: Oh, that was a great job. You know, the government really—that was working for the government, really, because it was World War II. And they hired me and there was other girls there, and they—it was a program that you had to be in for six weeks where they taught you how to use a screwdriver and a electric gun, electric ones. And then a hammer and pliers, because I didn't know how to use those kind of tools. I never had to use those, you know. I was a girl. I just knew how to wash dishes and iron and stuff like that.

DC: So at your house the boys had done the work with tools and you hadn't.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK.

MB: So anyway, but it was fun. And it was nice. I thought, gosh, how nice it was. It really was nice.

DC: How many women were in that class with you?

MB: Oh, there was always about fifteen. And at the end—but I—they took me out of the class before my six weeks was up. They put me on the job because I learned fast, I guess. I don't know. I look back at it now and that's what I'm surmising. I look back at it, you know, but at the time I didn't know. You know, I just did what they told me to do.

DC: Did you get paid while you were in the training class?

MB: Oh, yeah. Well that's what was so great, we got—I couldn't believe that I was getting that much money. And I can't even remember how much it was!

DC: But you got paid to learn how to use a hammer and things like that?

MB: Oh yeah. Good money! A lot better than nine dollars a week! Anyway, yeah because I saved quite a bit of money, because believe it or not, when my husband came home we bought a car. [laughs] So, you know, you couldn't buy cars then. But it was a second-hand car.

DC: Right, because they weren't making them during the war.

MB: No. No, no they quit making them. And so anyway, yeah I—and so the first job they put me on was on the, not on the DUKW line, on the *truck* line.

DC: Truck line, OK.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Now what were you doing?

MB: And I was—I put wires in and I put spark plugs—that was the wiring part of the job. And they just put me from—I never did the same job.

DC: They moved you around a lot.

MB: That was hard. That was hard. Because you know you'd think, "Oh, this is a pretty good job." And you wouldn't know it, but they'd come and get you, put you on another job. Oh God, you know.

DC: Why do you suppose they moved you around so much?

MB: I suppose they figured when somebody—if something happened to somebody and they needed somebody on that job they wanted every—you to know every job.

DC: Oh, OK. All right.

MB: See that's the way they like it now to do it at Pontiac Motors. They're trying to push that, too, you know.

DC: Diversify your training so you can just be plugged in. I see.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, so that goes way back. I didn't think about that. So anyway, then I ended—that was up on the truck line, and oh God was I glad when they put me down on the main floor downstairs.

DC: So the truck line was not on the main floor?

MB: No, it was in the—upstairs.

DC: The upstairs, OK. And then what was the problem with being upstairs?

MB: I just, I just kind of liked it downstairs. I don't know. I guess it's because I was down on the ground and I felt it was more important; I don't know. You know, I don't know. But it just seemed like I was closer to the door and, you know? I just felt that way. I don't even know why I felt that way.

DC: Was there anything about the work that was . . .

MB: Oh, that work on the truck line was hard.

DC: OK. What was hard about it?

MB: Oh God, getting in and out of those trucks and putting parts in, you know, under the dashboard and, and you had to use those heavy, you know those machines that would shake you, you know? And it was dangerous, I suppose. I didn't want to get hurt.

DC: Did you see any of your fellow workers get hurt?

MB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. But then, so anyway, I goes down on the main floor—oh yeah, they got hurt! I mean, you'd bump your head and everything! And then we are taking somebody to first aid all the time. So, you know . . .

DC: Oh, OK. Were there any serious injuries?

MB: No. But, you know, just, just that you just, I was a woman, I didn't want to get hurt like that. You know, I felt like that was a man's job, but I wanted that job.

DC: Were there men and women both working on the line?

MB: Men, oh yeah. The men that were working there, they didn't treat us nice.

DC: Tell me how they treated you. What did they do?

MB: Well, they called us names. And you had to learn to, you know, let it go by. They'd—we were Rosie the Riveters. "Hey Rosie!" You know, they called all of us Rosie. Because that—I don't know where they got that from, but almost every woman that worked in a factory had experience being called "Rosie".

DC: How did you feel when they called you Rosie?

MB: I didn't care. It didn't bother me. I had a good job and, you know, I—things like that just didn't bother me. But it did upset some people.

DC: And why would it bother them?

MB: I don't know. I really don't know.

DC: Did the men mean it in a teasing way?

MB: Yeah, in—they, but they didn't like us women being in there, either. I guess, I don't know why, to tell you the truth. They just didn't treat us really that great. There was maybe one or two that would, you know. And the bosses, they treated you nice.

DC: Was that true throughout the war?

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. And they never got better.

MB: No—I got into a couple squabbles. Oh, I got a good story to tell you.

DC: Go ahead, tell me!

MB: But anyway, the men were—they kind of treated you like, I didn't like it, with no respect. That's—and I demanded respect. And if you didn't give me no respect, because of the way I was brought up, that I *demanded* it, and if they didn't give it to me, I made a big deal out of it. I fought.

DC: Well tell me what happened.

MB: So anyway, this one guy used to come through and evidently—maybe he was flirting with me. I don't know, but I was married and that's the way I was brought up. I didn't pay any attention to other men. And I—maybe he liked my looks. I don't know. But I think that now, it wasn't. . . [phone rings].

DC: You can continue with the story in a second. There we go. Yeah, I get those calls all the time.

MB: Yeah. I've tried to figure, find out—my daughter's going to find out how I can get rid of those.

DC: Oh yeah, there's some way to sign up to get off those lists.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: I don't know exactly how to do it. Anyways, you said this guy . . .

MB: Oh yeah, so this guy, he was kind of like a, like a leader. You know, I don't know what he was, but he used to go all over, you know, and check the work a little bit. Maybe he worked in inspection, but I didn't know anything about inspection then. And so anyway, he used to come by and he'd say something to me and I ignored him. And one time, I was taking—my job was taking the carburetors off of a motor that came from a block test where they had checked the motor. OK? They checked the motor and it was running perfect. So from that line, it went on my line and I had to take the carburetor off of the line, off of the motor, and I had to—had a bucket there, a tub, and I would have to turn the carburetor upside down and let the gas drain out of it. And then I would put it, and I took the water pump off, too. Those were two things I had to do. And I put them in a box, because now this was tear down, where they, you know, packaged them and put it through that wax and went through a place where it was painted. You know what I mean, in the box. And then they were shipped overseas with that motor, and they had a truck that it went on when they shipped it overseas. So anyway, this guy, you know, I saw him every day, every day, and he always made some remark to me and I just ignored him. And this one day, I was bending over, putting that in, and he patted me. Whoa boy! I mean, I blew! And *I really* got mad! And the boss came over and told me that that was not right, and I said, "Well, you better tell him that what *he* did was *wrong*!" you know, and I was mad. And he said, "Well I'll take care of it." But he says, "Don't you do that. That's against our rules and regulations."

DC: What, yelling back at him?

MB: Yeah, yeah. I went after—I pushed him.

DC: Oh, you pushed him. OK.

MB: Ohhh, God yeah. I went after. Oh!

DC: How did he react when you . . .

MB: Well, he called me a name, you know. And—I'm trying to think of what the name he called me—and I called him a name back. I can't remember what the name—it was a funny name. It wasn't a name that I heard since or ever used in my language ever.

DC: Oh, something came up out of you.

MB: Yeah. And I mean, I had never even *used* that for—but he used it, his name first. I can't remember what it, I wish I could remember, because it was kind of silly. Anyway, that was taken care of and of course I guess he was told about it, too. He was called to the office. And the next day he came through and boy, he stayed clear of me. But he went through and did what his job was, whatever it is. And I happened to be in his way one day, he said— that's when he called me, what was it? "Get out of the way, you little piss willy!" That's what he called me. So you know what I did, don't you? I took that out, instead of putting the gas into the carb, into the tub, I turned the carburetor upside down and put it on his shiny shoes. But I was quiet about it. Oh, man! Did he ever get mad. So, he went and told the General Foreman. General Foreman came and told me. I said, "I'm not going to take that!" I says, "I know I can't quit." Did you know that you couldn't quit a job?

DC: Right, you weren't allowed during the war.

MB: During the war.

DC: Right. You had to have permission.

MB: Yup. We, when we went to work there, we had to work *every* day. Not a day off, either. And so anyway, he came up and talked to me, but he was so nice and we got to talking about it, as friends, me and the General Foreman. Come to find out, he was from Marquette. [laughs] He said, "Where are you from with such a, with such a temper?" You know, I says, well you know—because it appeared to be a temper because see, I was little. I was a little, tiny little thing there, for God's sake. I think I weighed about a hundred pounds! [laughs] And anyway, we got to talking, so we became real good friends. His name was Jack Johnson. I always remember his name. And so, but after that, the guy left me alone. It was really funny because it was, oh a long time later, I goes to my sister's house, and there's this guy that did that. And my sister and brother-in-law introduced me to him. And we recognized each other. He said, "You mean this is your sister?!" *Oh*, he told my sister, he says, "*Wow*," he says, "I know her." He says, "Well, you're like night and day." Because I had such a temper and my sister was so easygoing. [laughs] See, she worked there, too.

DC: Oh, she did, she worked as well.

MB: Yeah. But she was a foreman. You know what, they didn't have women foremen. But my sister, they liked her so well that she was actually a foreman there, but she didn't have the title because she was a woman and they wouldn't give a woman that title. But she did the

job.

DC: How long had she worked there before they made her the unofficial foreman?

MB: I think maybe a year or so.

DC: Did she start about the same time you did?

MB: No, no, she started before me.

DC: OK.

MB: Oh yeah. Yeah. And, yeah, she—but she did not have the title. But he knew her, because, see, he was some kind of a official, too. I don't know.

DC: You said he would be wandering around inspecting or something.

MB: Yeah. So anyway, but then I—my brother-in-law, he was a character, too. He got the biggest bang out of that, he laughed his head off. He really got a big bang out of it. He says that he remembered me telling him, my brother-in-law and my sister, about this incident at work. And he had got a big kick out of it to think I fought back, you know. My brother-in-law thought that was great. But he never realized it was one of his friends [laughs] that my sister was working with. Because we don't look, we didn't look alike, either. My sister was a blonde and I'm a dark head. I'm like my Mother and my sister was more like my Dad. And anyway, yeah so that was the end of *that* incident. And a couple more incidents like that, which I had to fight, but I mean, they were similar to that. And so, you know, I had respect. I had respect there.

DC: Now presumably these men were doing similar things to other women.

MB: Yes.

DC: How were they responding?

MB: Well, I don't know. We didn't have any time, you know, to really make friends where we worked because it was constant work.

DC: OK. So you really couldn't socialize.

MB: No, no. There was no socializing, except at—my General Foreman was nice and my group leader was nice and my foreman, you know, but they were nice and you talked with them, and I don't know, I even enjoyed going to work.

DC: You did. OK.

MB: Yeah. But because I was so, what would you call it? What would you—I just was so into

the war that I—everything I did, I was doing my part. See, because my brothers were all in there, too.

DC: Your brothers were all in the service or in the factory?

MB: Service.

DC: They were in the service, OK. So you felt you were doing your part for the war.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And so any . . .

DC: Did you feel that way when you started work there?

MB: Oh yeah. That's why I wanted to go. I felt like I was doing something for my husband and my brothers. That's how we were in those days about, about the war. We had to do our part. And anyway, yeah, so—but there was another incident, OK. On the same job that I'm on, now.

DC: Now were you on the truck line here or were you . . .

MB: No, I'm downstairs. Where they took the motors out of the—they tested them, and then I— it was called tear down. That was motor test, and then tear down. So we had to take *all* the parts off and put them in boxes that went through a, kind of like a paint booth but it wasn't a paint booth, it was, it was, the first coating of a waterproof box.

DC: It sounds like they wanted to make sure the motor worked before they bothered to ship it.

MB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. And we had to put our name on it, too, you know.

DC: So they knew who had inspected it.

MB: Mm-hmm. They knew who had done this box. And it went through this line, and then it went to *another* place where you sat at a table and you had to add the other parts to it. I don't—I only worked there maybe one or two times, three times maybe, when somebody, they needed parts. And we needed those parts out. And so anyway, I'm taking these parts off, so now I'm taking off the—not only the carburetor—I'm taking off the water pump. And I took this water pump off and when I took the water pump off the motor—now see, the whole motor is there, and we're all working together.

DC: How many are working together?

MB: About six of us. We can't talk, because we got to get that out. That's moving.

DC: How many did you have to—well, tell me the story first, then I'll ask you the question.

MB: Yeah. Anyway, we took—I had to take my water pump off. So you had to use electric gun

and everything, and I took the water pump off and put it in a box. But I also had a apron, like, with—there was a box over here on the side of the line and I filled these apron pockets full of wooden plugs. And I would take this wooden plug and I had a hammer, and I would have to—the wooden plug was—that water pump was, had a opening. So I had to take that wooden plug and put it in the hole of the water pump and give it a tap, because you know, just because it was to fit there when it went from here. So that that wouldn't get that same stuff on it, rubberize. And so I did that, I don't know how many days but, I mean, I was a good worker. I really put out work. But, you know, I was dumb. You know, really when it comes to stuff like that. I'm a girl. I'm not a man. I didn't have no sense when it came to stuff like this. So one of the plugs went in. That was all right. I just put another one on the top.

DC: Oh, it went all the way in. Went right through.

MB: Yeah. It was undersized. Somewhere where they made these wooden plugs, there wasn't—an inspector wasn't there. Because you know, you have these places where you gauge them, where—and if they're good you put them in the good box, and if they're bad you put them in the bad box.

DC: So one bad one got sent along and it went in and then you plugged it up and it was still on the inside.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Ooh my.

MB: Now see, this is when I first went to work there. I'm kind of green. And so, so that happened several times. But I never thought nothing of it. I never reported it. Man. All of a sudden, I guess six months, seven months later, I get called to the office. And my General Foreman says, "Margaret, the FBI is here and they want to talk to you." I said, "Why?!" He said, "I don't know," he said, "but we'll find out, because I have to go with you." So he goes to the office, and there's these FBI guys are in there, you know, but I'm young and dumb, don't know any better. I would've been—today I'd be scared if they came! [laughs] I wasn't scared, I said, "Well what did I do?" You know, I mean, I says, "I didn't do nothing wrong." And so we sat down, so they started questioning me about what the job I did—I mean it was kind of weird. Why are they asking me questions like this? And you know they just kept harping and harping and harping at the same questions over and over again! And all of a sudden it dawned on me, "What is this? This ain't right!" You know. And I said, "You know what"—I *knew* they had a union, but I had never seen any of—they were called stewards then. And I says, "Hey, I think I better get me a steward in here." And so the General Foreman, the General Foreman said OK. So, I don't know if he ever came, to tell you the truth. But I asked for him, anyway. And I didn't really know nothing about the union then, either. But I do know that we had a right to call somebody. I guess that must've been told to us and that, when we first hired in, and if you had any problems you call the steward or something, that they were on your side. Anyway, and I thought to myself, "Why would I need a steward? I can take care of my own

business." But, you know, but I just got the funniest feeling. They were asking me the *same* things. It was weird. And so anyway, whether the steward came in or not, I do not know. But my general foreman was there at all times. But that's because he liked me. He probably would've left but he liked me. He wanted to know what the score was, too, I suppose. And so anyway, I got mad. I said, "Well what the *hell*"—and I said "hell"—"is going on here?!" And I even apologized for my language.

DC: How old were you at this time?

MB: I was seventeen.

DC: Seventeen, OK.

MB: And I actually did. I apologized for the language I used. "But I want to know what's going on and let's get to the point! *What have I done*?!" And they asked me about the water pump and that again. And I didn't even know how it came out that I found out later on what I did. I don't think they told me. And they said that, you know, "This, you could be picked up for espionage." And I—ooh, then I hit the ceiling, you know. [very loudly!] I said, "I got six brothers in the service and one husband, and many, many friends. And you're trying to tell me that you can charge me with espionage?!" And oh, I mean I—and Jack Johnson, he was, oh God, he got nervous. [laughs] And he said, "Calm down, Margaret." You know, he told me to calm down. Now I don't know where the steward is, now, whether he was there or not. But I just felt like, well, I didn't know what they were anyways, and I figured I didn't need them.

DC: Yeah, you were just grasping at things at that point.

MB: Yeah. So anyway, well they let me go. And then Jack called me later into the office and I think he probably is the one that told me that what happened overseas was that the motors were heating up on the field, can you believe it? And I felt just terrible. Oh my God, I felt awful! And I told Jack, I said, "Oh, I don't want to go on that job no more." And I says, "Could you give me another job?" And he said, "I'll put you over on the tables. Would you like that?" I said, "Yeah, I'd like it." And—because *he* knew I didn't do that on purpose, you know. Didn't make sense, but that's the way they were. I mean, when I think back at it now, that was kind of stupid of those guys, but they were doing their job, too, I suppose. And I suppose there—and there was, too! There was spies in there, too!

DC: Were you aware of spies in there?

MB: No, not me, but we—you know how stories got around? You'd see somebody there and they weren't there anymore. See? So, you know, we kind of thought, well maybe they were.

DC: OK, so that was a possibility then?

MB: Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah we did. And, but anyway, I didn't want that label! Holy God! I

thought, God, are they going to talk about me? You know, but I did, I told them. I gave my brothers' names and where they were, I thought they were, and where my husband was. I said, "I'm here to help them out!" You know, I was mad.

DC: Yeah, I'll bet. That's a serious charge.

MB: Yeah. And so, I mean—my nephew, when I told him that story after he saw that picture there, where is it? Yeah, right here. Oh, he just thought that was—"*Really*?" You know, and he was interested because he was in the service, you know, he was a—he retired from the service. And so anyway, we laugh about it now. But at the time—and then I went home and told my sister, too, she was my oldest sister, you know. Told them about that and they kind of laughed about it. And my sister heard about it in her plant.

DC: Oh really? The story came around to her.

MB: She knew it was me. [laughs] Anyways . . .

DC: So was she also—she was at Yellow Cab, too?

MB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. But in her department they heard about it?

MB: But it was a different place altogether.

DC: Oh, a different plant.

MB: Yeah. It was a different plant. They had many plants. Yeah, and she was in a different plant. I never did go there. And she had, she worked as a foreman—but not the title—and she—they shipped the stuff out from her plant to wherever they were going, the boxes.

DC: OK, so you weren't even in the same building.

MB: No, not the same.

DC: So she heard the story.

MB: Yeah, she heard the story, too. She knew it was me because I had already told her. Yeah. So anyway, I went to this other job there, and you know, it's really funny. I wish I would've saved those letters. I didn't. But through the years, you know how you just—everything piles up.

DC: That's a shame though.

MB: Yeah. And so somewhere in my house, and I don't know exactly where they are, but I do have these V-mail, the little—have you ever seen them?

DC: The V-mail, maybe?

MB: Yeah. They're from a big letter, they're this big.

DC: Yeah, they put it on microfilm.

MB: Yeah. So that's how I got my mail from overseas. Well anyway, we were allowed to put our name and address in those boxes when we packed them. So I did get several letters from men overseas. But I didn't save them.

DC: Did you hear from your husband during the war?

MB: No. Well I got the V-mail letters from my husband. But I mean, from the—these were total people that I didn't know.

DC: Yeah. Right. Just the patriotic—support the troops.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, that's what it was. Everybody was really patriotic in those days. And I really was.

DC: So what was this next job about the bench, you said . . .

MB: Yeah, I went and worked on the bench, and that's where I put my name in those little boxes. Because that's where the final boxing of these water pumps and carburetors. They weren't big boxes, now, the big boxes were somewhere else. We had charge of the little ones. And then we also had a bigger one, too. Because I always remember there was three different sizes: the water pump was smaller, the carburetor was a little bit bigger, and then there was a big box that we had to package that had rubber, was rubberized, and then we would put tape on it, and we put our name and address in it, not all of them but, you know, when we had time.

DC: Just any old boxes.

MB: Yeah. Just our name and address, that's all. And then we had to dip into a big, like a tub around big as this kitchen, and we had to put it on hooks and put it down in some kind of liquid. And then it was like it was rubber. And then they were ready. We put them on the flat and then the truck would come and take the flats when they would get filled, you know. And we had to number them because they had to be quoted number, so that it matched the motor it came off. See?

DC: OK. All right. Now who worked at the bench, was it . . .

MB: There was about, about ten of us.

DC: Were they mostly women, or men and women?

MB: Oh yeah.

DC: All women.

MB: All women, yeah. They put mostly women on.

DC: And so you worked pretty closely with these women. Were they around your age, or were they older?

MB: They were probably around my age.

DC: Around your age, OK. Yeah.

MB: Oh, not older. We were all, you know, young girls. I was just a—I probably was the youngest. I never did get my birth certificate. Never turned it in. They asked me a couple times for it, and I said, "Oh, it's on its way." You know? [laughs]

DC: But they never followed up.

MB: But they didn't follow up, you know, I suppose it was unimportant.

DC: You said that you really weren't even aware of the presence of the union until you had that session with the FBI.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Do you remember if you joined the union?

MB: No, I didn't.

DC: You didn't, OK.

MB: No, uh-uh. No. But see, during the war—the union didn't have much to say because the government was taking over everything. So, you know, they kind of laid back a little bit, too. They weren't that aggressive during the war. And they were patriotic, too, I suppose. You know what I mean? But they still had them.

DC: The union was there.

MB: But we were aware of it, you know.

DC: But you weren't required to join.

MB: No, no. No. Because I don't ever remember that they took any union dues out. But I just—and then *after* the war when I went back to work and I got hired in to Pontiac Motor,

then I just automatically joined. Because I think, I think that was, I think in 1950 they had a right—did we have a right to not join?

DC: I think until 1950 you did, at Pontiac Motor.

MB: Yeah. But when I went in '53, it was automatically that you joined.

DC: Yeah, now we have to fill in the gaps there. How long did you stay at that bench job?

MB: I—that was at GM.

DC: For the rest of the war?

MB: Yeah. Except that—once in awhile, they needed extra workers—maybe somebody got hurt, maybe somebody got sick. And they would take you from the bench job and put you on this, and that's when I worked on the DUKWs, or the trucks.

DC: OK, so your work on the DUKW line would've been to fill in for someone else.

MB: Yeah. They were filled in. Yeah. But now all these parts that I worked on, too, were from the DUKWs and the . . .

DC: Oh, they were going into them.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So yeah, anyway, let's see now—and the war ended—when did the war end?

DC: 1945.

MB: Yeah. But I'm trying to think of the exact date and oh, my God, was that ever wonderful.

DC: Are you thinking about in Europe or in Japan?

MB: In Europe.

DC: That was in May, I think, wasn't it? Yeah, I think so.

MB: Yeah, I think it was in May.

DC: So tell me about it. What was it like in the plant?

MB: Well anyway, we got the news in the plant. Oh God, I put down my—I took my gloves off, I took my apron, I went home. I know I wasn't supposed to, but I did. I was so happy. I said, "Oh God"—I could not believe it, when you got the word. Well anyway, of course I went back to work the next day. I got called to the office. They accused me of starting a whole shoot and caboodle of everybody walking off their job! I went on my own. I went to

first aid and got a pass and said I was sick and I had to go home.

DC: Did other people leave their jobs, too, that day?

MB: Yes! They blamed me for it!

DC: They thought you were leading a walk-out.

MB: They thought I was a leader, I guess. I don't know, maybe I was too mouthy for . . .

DC: More of this espionage!

MB: [laughs] Oh, but you know, isn't that funny, you just—as patriotic as I was, well I just felt like I'd done my duty, I want to go home! I wanted, I just wanted to know more about it. I could not do any more work. I wanted to go get that newspaper that I read the newspaper . . .

DC: Did you get it that day?

MB: Oh, I got the newspapers. That guy was out on the corner hollering, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" I could hardly wait till I got there to get the paper!

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A,

MB: . . . yeah, everybody was, they were out of the buildings, the stores and everything! They were all over the streets! And they were building a big bonfire in the middle of Huron and Saginaw—that's a fork.

DC: Yeah, I know where that is. Yeah.

MB: And here I'm trying to get one of those papers. I was crowding because I heard them hollering, "Extra! Extra!" You know, that's how we—oh whenever I heard, "Extra! Extra!," that meant they had extra *news* about the union—I mean about the . . . [laughs]

DC: I know this from movies [laughs].

MB: Anyway, I'd even get off—if I heard one of the newsmen hollering on the streets—because that's where you bought your newspapers, on the corner of the streets in these newsstands—when I'd hear them, I'd say to the bus driver, "I'll get off at the next bus stop." When I was on the bus, and then I'd walk to the newsstand to get my news. Oh, I had to have those news—I wish I would've kept those newspapers. It would be wonderful. But anyway, yeah, I—oh, that Pontiac was, oh what a wild place it was. I mean,

everybody was so happy. And hugging each other and everything, you know what I mean? And they were so glad for the end of the war. Well then the next day I went back to work, of course. And that's when they called me in the office.

DC: And what came of that, when they called you in the office?

MB: Oh, well, you know, Jack Johnson said, "Well, she wasn't the cause of it. They all, just because she happened to be one, you know, they just . . ." I don't know who was the leader. It might've been that guy that didn't like me, who knows? [laughs] I don't know, to tell you the truth. But, you know, I just said, "Well I went home. I wasn't feeling good. I wanted to hear all about it." You know, I mean, I was really—I was really on my own.

DC: Were you hoping to stay on at Pontiac Motor after the war?

MB: Yeah, but I also knew that when the war was ended that we might not get a job. Because the men that were over there, they had to come back to their jobs.

DC: Had you known that from the start, when you got the job?

MB: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I knew that. But I also knew that if they were to hire anybody besides those men that we had [slight pause] checked—but anyway, what happened is my husband came home, and—to—on furlough. And he came to Pontiac and he—I got permission for him to come into the plant to see where I worked. And he came in, because, oh my God, you know, there was mostly women, you know. Oh my God, they made a big fuss over him. He got scared. They were hugging him and . . .

DC: Oh, your fellow workers did, yeah.

MB: Yeah. They just, when he went—see, because they were very nice to the servicemen when they let him come into the plant, you know. And, because I worked there, too, you know. But I wasn't with him, you know. The general foreman took him.

DC: Took him on the tour. Right, you had to work.

MB: Yeah. So anyway, so I talked to Jack Johnson and told him that my husband was going to the Japanese on the Pacific war. And I said, "If I get a chance to go and visit him in Washington, could I go?" And he said, "Yeah," he said, "There won't be no problem." So he made it. I don't know how, what he did, but I got off. And I, I didn't go with my husband, though, I mean, I just did that when my husband gave me the word.

DC: That it was OK for you to come.

MB: Yeah. And then, the war was over in Japan. That was in June, wasn't it?

DC: Uh, well, it would've been August.

MB: Yeah, August. Yeah. There. Yeah, it was August. And so I remember that when that one was over, I left work and went all the way up to the Upper Peninsula. My sister-in-law went with me. And we was all happy. But I put in for the time off. And you know, it was during the ration use—terrible. I wanted so bad to go home to see my Mother and Dad and, you know, you wanted to be with your close relations. And, of course, my sister-in-law wanted to be there, too, because she knew that the war was ended in Japan and her brother was not going overseas now again, see. And we didn't really know what was going to go off there. We didn't know if he was going to get out of the service right away or not. But anyway, I told her I want to go home, would she like to go? I got a car now, you know—that was a '37 Chevy. Anyway, I never drove it but down here, but tires were rationed and gas, so you know what I did? I went to the gas stations and told every one of the gas station people that, "If you give me gas, a tank full of gas, I'll promise you that when I come back. . ."—you know, you had to have these gas tickets—"I'll give you *all* my gas cards." I never used any of them. "You're going to get them all." And that helped them, so they could get more gas. And I said, "And I'll give you—if you give me some good tires, I'll give you *all* of my tire [ration cards]." Because I didn't use the car, so I didn't really need those tires. You were allotted so much for tires and so much for gas and, you know, I can't really remember. You were allotted so many tickets for sugar and nylons. God, I can't remember all the things. We got little books.

DC: A ration booklet.

MB: Yeah. You had to go get them. And I got them, in case somebody else needed them, you know. But the gas and the tires and stuff, I didn't need. But if anybody needed them—but now I needed them to go home. So this one gas station, you know, he said, "OK," you know. And I said, "But I'll bring *all* of them, and I'm going to get some *more* for you when I go up north. Them people don't drive because," you know, of the gas ration. So patriotic, they were. And so anyway, we went up north and that gas station man told me, "You thought you were kidding me, but I didn't *need* those tanks of gas!" [laughs] I thought I was, I thought I was . . .

DC: You thought you were snowing him.

MB: Snowing him. [laughs] And anyway, but I knew the gas guy, too, but he didn't tell me until I got back. You know, I gave him a whole pile of tickets. [laughs]

DC: Did you ever end up going out to Washington?

MB: Oh yeah, I did.

DC: You did, OK.

MB: Oh yeah. And then, so that's when Jack Johnson told me, "Sure, you can go." But, in the meantime, like I said, before my time came to go, because there was a date. You know, you have to have dates. So I left and I went to Washington and it just happened that my brother was stationed there, too. It was really funny because my husband found out, and I

don't even know how he found out about it. But anyway, so I was really happy to think that I was going to see my brother, too. Not only my husband. And so—and I went to work. Where did I go to work there? I can't remember. Some kind of a . . .

DC: Out in Spokane?

MB: Yeah. I think it was called Fairmont's. They had something to do with eggs and you had to separate the eggs, the yolk from the white, you know.

DC: How did you like that compared to your job at Yellow Cab?

MB: Oh, it was *easy*. Yeah. It wasn't hard. You know, you hurt your hands on everything there—Yellow Cab—you had scratches and stuff all over you. But anyway, I went to work there, and then from there he didn't have to go to the Pacific. So he got—he got, uh, orders to go to Fort Wayne, Indiana. And so we were able to travel together to go to Fort Wayne. And that's where he got discharged.

DC: OK, from Fort Wayne.

MB: Yeah. So and then, of course, I don't really remember how we—I guess we took a bus from there to Pontiac, and then from Pontiac we went to the Upper Peninsula.

DC: Oh, you went on up there.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. All right.

MB: And I left the ties here, you know, at Pontiac. And I knew that—I never went back to the Yellow Cab because . . .

DC: You never did?

MB: No, but somebody that worked with me at the Yellow Cab told me that I could go and sign up for unemployment benefits and I drew unemployment benefits while I was up there.

DC: Oh, you did, OK. How long did you stay up north?

MB: Well, then my daughter was born. We lived there. We bought a house up there. And . . .

DC: Did you think you were going to resettle up north there?

MB: Yeah. Yeah, because of my husband. He's from Munising, now. He's from a city, not from the jerkwater town. [laughs]

DC: The big city!

MB: Yeah. Anyway, so we bought a house there . . .

DC: In Munising?

MB: Yeah. And then my daughter was born.

DC: And when was she born?

MB: She was born—it's her birthday today. June 24, 1946. And . . .

DC: Can we take a break for a second? [tape turned off for a bit] All right, now if I remember right, you had just bought a house in Munising.

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK.

MB: And then my daughter was born and she—my husband was a painter by trade. And he—work got slack, oh, in 1949. So I told him, you know, that I like living in Pontiac and I told him about the plants and everything, that, you know, why didn't he go work for, you know, into the—for General Motors or Ford or whatever. And then, and then I'd follow him, because they had good benefits and, you know, I liked it. So I said that, "You could go and stay with my sister and apply for jobs at all the factories, and then I'll come down. And you can come and get me." And so that's what he did, and he got the job. He got a job right away.

DC: At Pontiac Motor?

MB: Yeah, Pontiac Motor.

DC: And did you have just the one child then?

MB: One child, yeah. Yeah. And we rented out the house that we had in Munising, and my Dad took all the other stuff to his place, my Mother and Dad. And then my husband came and got us on the weekend and had an apartment for us. And we came down.

DC: What had you been doing in Munising between the time your daughter was born . . .

MB: I didn't do anything. I just stayed home.

DC: You were at home. OK.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: How did you like that?

MB: I liked it, but you know, I would've liked to have gone to work to help out, you know. But, you know, jobs weren't that easy to get up there. People were settled there. Those people that had those jobs, they were going to stay there. You know what I mean? And they didn't have no desire to leave. And so anyway, I came down here and my daughter was four and then she started school at five, and then when she was six, I think, she was in school all day. And then I went to work for Neisner's again.

DC: Oh, you did? OK.

MB: Yeah, I got hired back in. Yeah. I always kind of went back there. And I was working at Neisner's. My husband started at Pontiac Motor in 1949. And I was working at Neisner's in 1953—no, I went to work in 1952, just at Neisner's. And in 1953 I got word that they were hiring women at Pontiac Motor. So me and another friend decided that we were going to take off from work the next day—we're going to go sign up.

DC: Another friend from Neisner's?

MB: Mm-hmm. And you wouldn't believe it. She got hired and I didn't. [laughs] I asked her to go with me and I picked her up and everything! She got hired. I didn't. So then we waited and waited and waited. And this was in January—she gets hired in January, February. And so I asked another friend of mine in May, I says, "I think they threw my application away. I'm going back." Because I knew they were hiring. And I'm not hearing nothing! So she said, yes, she would like to go. So I got—I don't even remember who told me—somebody told me to be first in line on this morning. And it was kind of chilly and kind of rainy, I think, that day. So we got up real early. We were in line at 4:00 in the morning. Well we were one of the first ones in line, too. And she never got called, but I did. I got called this time.

DC: You did this time, OK.

MB: Yeah. So I got hired in on May 11th of 1953.

DC: OK. How did you feel about that?

MB: Oh, I was happy, you know. And so I—and I told my husband about it. Oh, I said, "Just think, if I can go there and work, and I won't stay but I. . . ."—because he didn't really want me to work, you know.

DC: Oh, I was going to ask you. He didn't want you to.

MB: No. No.

DC: Well what did he think about you working at Neisner's?

MB: He didn't really like that, either, but he knew that the money helped, you know. He didn't

really like it. But he just didn't want me to work. But I—I wanted to work. And so anyway, I went to work, you know—like I said, he didn't want me to work and I went to work and I was happy because I knew that money was *good* money. And I said, "I'll just use all my money and we'll get a brand new car. And then I'll quit." Oh, that sounded good to him, too.

DC: Was that really what you wanted, though?

MB: I wanted to work. But I just—I just wanted—that was a way of getting him to let me go. So I went to work and I worked on the body line. Oh God, what a job!

DC: Tell me about it.

MB: Whew! I'll tell you, but we had committeemen then. I used them, too!

DC: You used them, OK.

MB: Ohhh, God did I ever use them! They were there whenever I needed them, because they, ooh, didn't treat us nice!

DC: Tell me how they treated you.

MB: [In a tone of rising indignation] They just, just—you could—you had to have somebody on your job before you went to the bathroom, and you had to go to the bathroom. You got to go to the bathroom, don't you? Yeah, but they only had one person. You wait till, like, your turn came. God, I—I didn't wait sometimes.

DC: Really. What would you do? Just leave?

MB: No, I just leave the job. But see, one thing about me: when I worked on a job, I would get it done so fast that I would be ahead of myself. So that's what I did, I'd get ahead of myself and then I'd take off and I'd go across the railroad tracks to the bathroom.

DC: Across the railroad tracks, how?

MB: There was a railroad track right there.

DC: Right through the building.

MB: Yeah. And it wasn't far from—it wasn't very far. Just across the tracks. And it was in the building, of course. But anyway—and I'd go to the bathroom and I'd come right back. But I'd also tell a friend, "keep an eye," you know. So I never did do anything wrong. But of course the *boss* didn't think that was right. I don't think he liked me. Anyway, he was one of those kind. I, I'll tell you the truth, I used to mock him. He was, he acted like he was a big wheel, you know. He was a general foreman, but you know, he acted—he liked authority. He was, he was not a, a educated person. He was one of those kind that—

authority, he liked. He liked authority.

DC: Had he ever worked production?

MB: I don't think so.

DC: Oh, really.

MB: No. I don't think so. I don't think he *ever* did work production. And anyway, I just didn't like him. And I can name his name to anybody at Pontiac Motor that worked there during the time I did. And I can name his name—his name is Joe Hudson. They all know him. They had a taste of him, too. And so, naturally he had to tell me that I'm *not* allowed. And um . . .

DC: Would you bring a committeeman in for something like that?

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK, what would happen?

MB: Well, the committeeman would talk, and I don't know how they dickered, or anything. He just, "Well try not to do it, you know. But, you know, I don't blame you." They were on my side. But, you know, they could only do so much. They had to kind of smooth it for you. You know what I mean? It just made it smoother.

DC: Did you feel like they worked well for you?

MB: Oh yeah, they really did. The union, I don't know—I would've never lasted. Because see, I didn't—I couldn't stand that when nobody respected me, because I respect people. My Mother taught us to respect another human being. But they were not respecting *me*. And I just, I just was a fighter.

DC: Were there mostly women on the body line, or was it a mixture of men and women?

MB: Well, there was men, too. And some of those men, they wasn't very nice. I didn't like them. But that's because—you know, you could always tell when a man, how a man treated you if his wife worked. If his wife worked, he treated you nice. But if his wife didn't work, he didn't treat you nice. That's how—you know, we could spot that.

DC: Really?

MB: Yeah. And, but most of them were nice. They were pretty good. But that was because of the union, too, you know. They knew that we had rights. And I just . . .

DC: Was your job cons—oh, I'm sorry, I interrupted you. Go ahead.

MB: I just couldn't get over the difference between 1940, was it, what is it, '43 I went to work? '43 or '44—I was seventeen when I went to work. And then I come in '53 and I had people on my side.

DC: You noticed that?

MB: Mm-hmm.

DC: OK.

MB: But like I said, I realized that during the war, the union didn't have that much. Because they were working for the government, you know. They were unionized, but yet the government took over because they had to give up the automobile. So anyway—but I—that was a big difference, because I sure had—I had—I got to say that I was well represented as soon as I got there. I was treated great by the union. They were there for me. And if I thought I was maybe not right, I questioned it through the union, and they would tell me if I was right or if I was wrong. And they would tell me which move to make.

DC: So they provided information.

MB: Yes! Oh yeah. They were right there to help me. I—I thought the union was great. And I *know* that the union has done so much for the [slightly hesitating] economic—of the United States, of our country. And also for the social bit. You know, they *have*. Because really truly, I don't know if you've had much to do with the union, but they're good people. And they're charitable people, too. They're not, they're not for themselves a hundred percent, you know. Some are, but they really are—the union really works for you.

DC: Were any of your committeemen women?

MB: Let me tell you, I was—I think I was the second committeewoman that ever was.

DC: Were you? When did you become a committeewoman?

MB: In 19—was it, uh, '50—there was one woman that was a committeewoman and I know her name. Her name was Marge Blanzey. B-L-A-N-Z-E-Y. And that was odd. She was the only one.

DC: OK. And that was before you.

MB: Oh, that was before me. She was there, had been there I believe since 1949, and it's '53 now, when I get there. And I'm really—I thought that was great. I really did. I didn't say anything, but I really thought that was great. But most of the committeemen thought she was good, too. She was a fighter, like me.

DC: She earned their respect.

MB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: And so when did you become a committeewoman?

MB: But she was a fighter, I mean, she didn't—the company I don't think liked her.

DC: Did she ever fight for you?

MB: No. She didn't have to. But I had a good committeeman.

DC: OK. Yeah. She was in a different unit.

MB: Yeah, yeah, she was—had charge of different people. But my committeeman, oh God, he—I always wondered why he never became president and didn't go up the ladder. But he was a very staunch union member. And he did *so* much for me. And I don't know why he did it for me, but I—maybe he liked me because I was a fighter, too.

DC: Can you remember other examples of things that he did for you?

MB: Yeah. [chuckles] I got into a squabble with one of the foremen because, you know, we have this United Way, comes. And management used to be in charge of the United Way. And they used to kind of get feathers in their hats, if they could get everybody to donate a certain amount of their wages. And I didn't like the way he went about it. "Sign here, this is how much. . ." *Nooo*, I don't sign—I'm not signing that. I said, "I don't want to give to the United Way. I'll give it to the United Way in my own way, not through you. I don't have to do this through you." Oh God, was he ever awful to me. He put me from one job to the next.

DC: Oh, he would take it out on you with your job assignments.

MB: Took it out. I says, and I says, "And if you think for one minute my signing that paper's put a feather in your hat, you're crazy because you ain't never going to get that feather from me." I said, "I demand respect from you. I show my respect to you and you better show it to me because you and I will *never* get along." And, oh, he really got hostile, you know. And he says, "We'll see about that! I'm your boss!" And I said, "Well we'll see about that. You get me my committeeman!" And of course the committeeman was right there. And I told him—I mean, that committeeman says, "I'm glad. He has no right to do that." So he—the committeeman was on my side totally. And it really went far. And so finally I got called to the office one day, and I told them that I wanted my committeeman with me if I go to the office. I want the committeeman with me. You're not going to accuse me of doing anything that I'm not going to do without me having somebody on my side. So I had to go to the office and the committeeman came, and they wanted me to accept—how is it? They wanted me to accept his apology without him being there. Upper management. And I said, "No, I won't accept it." But the committeeman's just sitting there. Now he's not sticking his nose in, because you know, he was there just to be my

witness. So he was just sitting there and I told him that, no, that I would not accept his apology because I wanted everybody on the line to know that I won out, that I don't have to sign no paper for the United Way unless I wanted to. And that no person, no general foreman's going to make me do that. I said, "This is not a communist country. We're in America. He's not pushing me." And so anyway, they said, "Oh well, what do you want us to do? Do you want us to put him up in the middle of the street in Pontiac and throw stones at him?" You know? That's how they were, these . . .

DC: Yeah. Take it to extremes.

MB: Yeah. And I can't really remember exactly the detail. And I said, "No, not that." But I said, "I would like to ask you to do me a favor." "Oh, what was that? What would that be?" Now that the committeeman's there. I said, "I want to see Critchfield [sp?]." That's the big top man, you know—that's the top man. I said, "I would like to speak to him." You know, nobody ever asked for that. But I did. And that committeeman, he loved it. [laughs] He loved it because I wasn't scared. But I wasn't no rebel, but I wanted respect and I wanted them to treat me as nice as I treated them. And I was doing my job. And anyway, they said, "Well we'll see about that," you know, but of course it never came to that. And anyway, they called the general foreman in and the committeeman was there and he apologized and I said, "I want everybody on the line to know it, too." And I mean, you know, that was a big line—that was the body line I was working on. And they could tell by the way he treated me, you know. They—he was there, saying "Hello, how are you?" and everything, and they all *knew* it.

DC: There's a difference.

MB: Yeah. And some of them asked me about it, see. "How did that turn out?" Well you see, he's nice as pie to me. He's treating me with respect. And they said, "Did you sign up for the United Way?" And I said, "No, and I never will." [laughs] And here I worked on it later on, years—I worked on it and solicited all the money and I went to different plants and everything to get the money.

DC: Well it sounds like you weren't opposed to United Way. You were opposed to the way that he handled it.

MB: That's it. Yeah. But the committeeman was good. I mean he was a good committeeman. And so I, like I say, I really—I got to say, that union helped me because I would've been *fired* if there was no union. I don't think I would've lasted six weeks.

DC: You said the work was really hard, too. Tell me about the work itself.

MB: Yeah, it was really, really hard. I had to—we had a table, like on the line—you know, it was a lot harder than during the war, even. You know what I mean? Because it didn't seem like it was so—I don't know, it didn't seem like they treated you so awful.

DC: During the war?

MB: Yeah. I mean, they were glad to think that we were doing the job for them, you know? Because there was no men to take the job. They were gone. But there was a table there, and on that table was all the parts that we would have to put—and I had a box, like a box in front of me on an apron and I had fuses, bulbs, and all kinds of little things that I had to, that I had to wire the car. Besides I had to take a harness—it was like a harness—and I had to put it over my shoulder—and I'm a little, tiny little thing! And I carried that, and I'd have to get into every car, every other car—no, it was every third car, I think it was. Every third car. So by the time I got to this table and filled this box with all I got and take that thing and put it over my shoulder, my car was right here.

DC: It's all ready to go.

MB: Yeah. So *now* I have to slide in the car in the seat. And I'd slide in the seat. And do you know that I wore out a pair of pants every day.

DC: Every day?

MB: Yeah. So you know what? I got wise to that. I mean, I took two aprons and put them over so that I would slide in on the aprons instead of on my pants.

DC: So how many of these cars would you wire in a day?

MB: I wired, I can't remember now. At that time, in '53, they were making fifty-four cars an hour. I mean, that was a complete car an hour.

DC: And you did three, one of every three.

MB: Yeah. And so anyway, yeah you slide—you have no idea, I mean, we had to put our initials on that car, too, so if it backfired. But I'd be in this car and I'd sit on the seat now, and I'd be like this. And I'd keep that harness off like this and poke it through a hole so that it was on the outside of the car, you know, before the motor is—that's the body. There's nothing on the front. It's just the body. And I'd stick that harness through that hole and I used to have to take—it was a box like this, under the dashboard, like this. And I used to have to put a hole, a fuse in for every electrical thing—now I don't even remember what it was all for. And then I had to take wires from the wire that I shoved through, and take those wires and wire them to that fuse box so that you knew exactly where to put them, with a little thing like that. And then you'd go out of the, out of the body and I had to take a electric gun and some kind of a screw—I don't know what it was—and that one gun and then I put my initials on. And I'd go to the table and put that stuff in there, my box, and my third car was right there. I mean, it was *right there*! See.

DC: So you're working hard.

MB: Oh yeah. But the only thing that the union told me that I shouldn't do is—I got to do that job so good that I could get ahead. So if I had to go to the bathroom, see? And I really

could—I could wire that thing with my eyes shut!

DC: How long did it take you to develop that skill?

MB: Not very long. Yeah. And so they didn't want me to do that because that meant that they were probably taking another person off the cars—they did try it.

DC: Oh, they did?

MB: Yeah. And they had a squabble over that, so . . .

DC: When did they try to do that?

MB: Not long after I, you know.

DC: OK, so they were going to reduce you, say, from three people doing that to two people doing that? Was that what they were going to do?

MB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And see, I was—I didn't think, you know. Boy, I preached that to all the ones that came in after me when I was a committeewoman. Because even I told the committeeman—he said, "Yeah but some people," he says, "You don't tell those things to some people. They just resent it." They think, forget it, you know. Because a lot of people that go to work there, went to work for Pontiac Motor, they were kind of brown-nosing. You know, they thought they'd get a better job and they weren't.

DC: It wouldn't work that way.

MB: No. Don't work that way. But, you know. Anyway, so then there were times—now I had—there were times, too—now I had a nephew that—he's very high up in the white collar with General Motors. In fact, I can't remember what his title is, but he's *way* up there, OK. He drives a Cadillac company car, so you know he's up there. And he has a lot of dealings with the union if they have to connive, you know. But he's my nephew. And when he was first going to—came to—you know, going through the GMI Tech [Center School], you know, he used to come see me on the job. And occasionally I—he would help me while he's talking to me. And the union, union member would call a committeeman on me because I had help. "Get a new—get somebody else to do the work instead of that white collar." Well, you know, that was kind of silly, because you know they're not going to get another person to do that job when I can do it myself. He was just helping me and talking to me. So those are the kind of petty things that you still had going on there.

DC: So he was just visiting now.

MB: He was visiting me at, from—see, those GMI students would go to school for six weeks, and then they'd come into the plant, and he kind of was interested and wanted to know what was going on, too. See, that makes him more intelligent. So—because he knew me, and I'm working on the line. That was very interesting to him to see what I had to do.

DC: Did he ever work on a line?

MB: No, no, he just went right from school to GMI and so, you know, he—him and I are real good friends. He kind of—he'll kid with me against the union but he knows. Because—I don't know if you know—do you know Dave Moore?

DC: By name, I think, but I've never met him.

MB: Yeah. He's the chairman. Well, Dave Moore and I are real good friends and of course, Dave and Ron became—got to know each other through the negotiating and I told Ron that Dave was a good guy. And Ron was kind of new, he's young, and I said, "As long as you have to dicker with the union, you better know a little bit more, a little bit about him. Dave will help you." So him and Dave are still good friends to this day, even though he's on the management and Dave's on the union. But, of course Dave's getting ready to retire pretty soon, but Ron, he's still quite young. He's forty—I think he's only forty-five.

DC: OK. How long did you stay on the body job?

MB: Well I worked there for—well you know, now we're going back now, so anyway, here's what—when I talked to, uh, not—I don't remember what the guy's name was, but we talked and they said that—about me asking Joe—I wouldn't accept his apology—they said, "Well what would you like?" I said, "Well I'll tell you what. If I ever get out of Plant 8, don't ever bring me back." I never went back. I went to *every* plant there was and I mean, I was transferred because you know how you—I don't know—you don't know the plants. OK, they're all different plants. And they go according to seniority. When they're cutting back in this plant, you're going to go to another plant where you might have a little more seniority now. But when they cut down, you go to another plant. So I don't think there was a plant in Pontiac Motor that I didn't work in.

DC: Over the course of time.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. And, but I, as—all the people that I worked with, for some reason or other, I don't know if it was just luck, I never went back to Plant 8. Because that'll kill you, that Plant 8 would.

DC: Was that the body line plant, that's where you worked?

MB: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

DC: OK. Was that all they did there, or did they do other things in Plant 8?

MB: No, the—it was just the body line where they put all the parts on the car and then at the end of the line, the car is done. It drives off. The only job I would've liked in Plant 8 was to drive the car off the line. And, you know, you really had to have high seniority to do that. So I wasn't going to get that, you know.

DC: So where did you go after Plant 8?

MB: So then they transferred—when Plant 8 cut back on production, they cut production—I went to Plant 7, and that was a press.

DC: OK. I'm sorry, I'm trying to get the timing down. When did Plant 8 cut back on production?

MB: Um, let's see. That must've been about in 1955.

DC: OK. [pause] We might be able to figure that out another way, too. But around 1955, anyway.

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK.

MB: And then I went to Plant 7. That was small presses.

DC: OK. And what did you do there?

MB: I worked on the line, too. You know, every part, it seemed, that was made, had to be on the line. And you know, there was always a head of the line, end of the line. And you would put the part in, you know, in a bare piece of metal and it would press to a kind of a, whatever it was that you were pressing. And then it would come off of this press and you'd go to the next press. And then from the next press, goes out with a little conveyor there.

DC: Yeah. Which parts were *you* working on?

MB: God, I worked on, oh the headlights and—oh God, I can't remember all the things. Oh, control arms and flywheels. I mean, there were all different parts. I can't really remember, you know, because—anyway, and then they cut back in Plant 7 and they sent me to Plant 9 and I worked on a merry-go-round where I had to remove the—I had to remove the spark plugs. Or did I put the spark plugs in? Yeah, I put the spark plugs in, on the merry-go-round. I put the spark plugs in and I can't remember what else I put in, where we had to complete the motor so that when it went on the block test, it was there. They tested it and then from the test block it went into the car whenever . . .

DC: Uh huh. When it was approved.

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK. And so, well how did you like those jobs, the small presses in Plant 7 and the merry-go-round in Plant 9?

MB: I liked the Plant 7.

DC: Plant 7 was the best?

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK, what was best about it, what did you like?

MB: Because it wasn't heavy. It wasn't heavy. Dangerous, though. You know, your hands—you could get your fingers taken off. But if you followed safety rules, you wouldn't have to worry. But there was several people that lost their hands.

DC: Oh really? While you were there?

MB: Oh yeah. And . . .

DC: Were, again, mostly women running those jobs or women and men?

MB: No. Men, too.

DC: OK. Were any of your jobs considered women's jobs, or were they just jobs?

MB: No. No, no.

DC: Just jobs. OK.

MB: And when we went into a department, too, and if a new woman came in she got, [chuckling a bit] she got the hardest job every time.

DC: Yeah. Was that true of you, too?

MB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

DC: Now was that because of seniority or because she was a woman?

MB: Because we are a woman. I don't know why, but for some reason or other the management didn't seem to like women. Finally they got used to it, but I mean, when I was there, and . . .

DC: Did the union have any say over that at all?

MB: No, I didn't have no say about where they put me. But I got transferred there. I was just lucky I had a job. Yeah. And the union didn't have anything to say about it, either. The only time a union rep could do anything about what job you got would be if it was a hindrance to your health, like maybe the fumes or something, they could negotiate. Not in a

mean manner, but you could talk sometimes. You know, they dickered back and forth. And yeah but, oh they didn't—there was several of them there that I just didn't like. In fact—and then what my best job was, when I went into reliability.

DC: Liability?

MB: Reliability.

DC: Reliability, OK. And when was that?

MB: That was—because Dave Moore had something to do with it. He helped me out getting there. They didn't want me in it. They didn't want women in it. And I fought.

DC: What was reliability?

MB: Reliability is inspection.

DC: OK.

MB: And that's a good job. It's a good job. You inspect. They didn't want women in it.

DC: Now you say "they," do you mean Pontiac Motor or do you mean . . .

MB: Pontiac Motor.

DC: Pontiac Motor.

MB: Pontiac Motor.

DC: Why didn't they want women in it?

MB: Oh, because—I don't know, to tell you the truth. But I fought to get into it.

DC: How did you fight, tell me how you fought.

MB: Well I put in—my committeeman told me that they were needing people on inspection. I guess the inspection people, maybe, were retiring, or they'd been there for years and then they retired. So he told me about it. He said, "Would you like to go?" And I said, "Oh, I'd love it." He said, "Well you know, it's not easy—mental, but it's not hard." I said, "I'd love it." So he said, "Why don't you put in for it?" Well, I did. But I never got it and never got it. I was just so far on the list. So I told my girlfriend. My girlfriend had a lot more seniority than me. She might've had eight years seniority more than me. But because—now see they didn't like me—for one thing, I was a union rep at one time.

DC: We have to figure out when that was, yeah.

MB: I was trying to figure out when that was, too. That was over in—that was that new department, I'm trying—3076. I remember the number, 3076, was a new department. It had control arms and—it was kind of a rough job.

DC: OK. That was when you were a union rep. But we have two different things going on here. You're trying to get into the reliability job . . .

MB: Yeah, but I want to tell you about when I became a union rep before I got reliability.

DC: OK. This is before you got reliability. We'll figure out the dates there, eventually here. But—because you said that they were already kind of looking at you funny because you had been a union rep.

MB: A union rep when I got to—yeah.

DC: So how did you finally get this reliability job then?

MB: Well, from the committeeman telling me. See, that committeeman had also got me out of that other department, because at one time I was over in Plant 15. So—and they were hiring new people, and why wouldn't I have a right to go back there? See?

DC: Because you had been there before?

MB: Because I had been there before. But there had been a lot of other people that has been there before that wanted to get back, too. But they weren't doing anything about it and they had more seniority and would've been able to get back there before me. But when I went around to the different people—because I was a committeewoman, I found these things out, OK?—so I told these other girls that I worked with that I was going to resign from the committeewoman's job and that I was putting in to go back to Plant 15, because I had heard that they were getting new people in there. And they said, "No, we're not going to do it." You know, they're not going to do it. So I did it. And when the time came when I came—my committeeman in [Plant] 15 was working for me. So I resigned the committee job that I had in my department and he told me that I was coming through. I never met that committeeman. I mean, I talked to him on the phone. But he had never seen me and I'd never seen him. But—so anyway, I finally—it came through, my paperwork came through. And, oh they were really surprised because they didn't think I was going to get it. Now I got it, oh, they want it.

End of Tape II, Side A

Begin Tape II, Side B

MB: . . . for it. So, eventually they all—eventually they came, I mean, but I was the one that started it.

DC: You paved the way for the reliability job.

MB: Yeah. Not for the reliability, just to get back in Plant 15.

DC: To get back in Plant 15, all right.

MB: Yeah, because I liked that plant. You know, that was 7 but it switched to Plant 15.

DC: Oh, it was 7 but they switched it to 15.

MB: Yeah. Because all the parts from Plant 7 went to Plant 15, which was a new plant, and the—in this Plant 7 they had a different job.

DC: OK. So they moved the new job into Plant 7, but were you back working with small presses again at that point?

MB: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's what I did.

DC: OK. Let me see if I can get the timing down here as best we can. Because I'm getting a little bit confused here. Let's see, in the cutback in 1955 you went over to Plant 7.

MB: Uh-huh.

DC: OK. And then you switched to Plant 9, but I . . .

MB: Yeah, that was probably in around '56.

DC: '56. And then the things I'm trying to figure out would be when you went back to Plant 15 . . .

MB: OK, but from—'56 I got laid off, too.

DC: '56, oh OK. OK. We need to talk about that. We'll put that on the table for a second. But when were you the committeewoman?

MB: OK, it was after '57 when I found out that they were hiring people back to Pontiac Motors with less seniority than me. I'm working at the bank—I'm working at the Pontiac State Bank.

DC: All right, so we have a few things to talk about.

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK, yeah. All right, so after that, that's when you became a committeewoman?

MB: Yeah.

DC: OK.

MB: See, because I said I'm going to watch out for the women.

DC: Excellent. OK. All right. Well let's go through that. And we'll figure out when you got the other positions later. But let's focus on this part right now. You got laid off in '56. What happened in '56?

MB: I went to work at the bank.

DC: OK. Which bank was that?

MB: It was Community Bank, Community National Bank.

DC: OK. Do you know what the reason was for the layoff at that point in time?

MB: Cutbacks. They went according to seniority, you know, I was kind of low. But there was a lot of other people that got laid off when I did, too.

DC: OK. And you went to work for the bank. And what did you do there?

MB: I was in the bookkeeping department. And my sister was in charge of loans.

DC: Did she help you get that job?

MB: No, but I gave her as reference. That helped. And, yeah, so anyway I got the job at the bank. Now, when I was working at the bank, I also went from the bank to help at Neisner's occasionally.

DC: All right. Now— a sidetrack question, then we'll get back on this track again—but when you got laid off, what was your husband's reaction? You had told him before you were just going to work in order to buy a car, but here you are . . .

MB: Yeah. Oh, he—all through the years he wanted me to quit. I never did. No. He did. He did—he really wanted me to quit. It was many, many, many disputes about that. And thank God I didn't follow through, because where would I be today?

DC: Yeah, good question. So anyway, that's another whole range of questions that we may get to and we may have to figure out another time, who knows? But you did the bookkeeping job at the bank and worked some at Neisner's—that was your touchstone every time things were tough in Pontiac.

MB: Yeah, the sidekick, yeah.

DC: OK and so then it sounds like the next year, or—how long were you laid off?

MB: OK, let's see—I don't remember because it was getting kind of close. I hired in in '53 and I got laid off in '56 or '57?

DC: You said '56, but . . .

MB: OK, I think it was '56, OK. And I'm getting close to the—see, if you were going to be laid off over that time that you had, you would have to be rehired back in.

DC: Oh, you mean if you were laid off longer than you had been on the job?

MB: Mm-hmm. So I'm wondering about that. But I got this good job at the bank, and I said, "I ain't worrying about it." You know.

DC: So did you like the job at the bank?

MB: Oh, I liked the job at the bank. I had a good job. I mean, and they liked me there. And, you know, I was even in a couple of their movies.

DC: Movies?

MB: They advertised. You know how they advertise, for commercials, to advertise the bank. Well anyway, so I kind of liked it. And they treated me so good there. They really treated me good. And it was almost time for my vacation—first vacation pay, you know?

DC: At the bank.

MB: Yeah. And so I wasn't really interested in going back to Pontiac Motor. But wouldn't you know, on my day off, half a day—we always got a half a day off a month from the bank—I comes home here, the telephone rings, it's Pontiac Motor calling me back to work. And, oh God, I said I got to go in. I just have to go. So I went through the procedure of hiring back in. Because I didn't have to, you know what I mean? I didn't have to go, but I wanted the check. Gee, that money sounded so good.

DC: Was it the money? What made you want to reconsider Pontiac Motor?

MB: Money.

DC: Money, OK.

MB: Oh yeah, money.

DC: So you made more at Pontiac Motor than at the bank?

MB: Oh, lots. Lots, yeah. The money was just like Neisner's, nine dollars a week. Well, you

know what I mean—it's, it wasn't even a comparison with the—so anyway, I'm making almost—at Pontiac Motors, I made almost as much as my husband. The only reason I didn't make as much as him is because he was on skilled trades, and I wasn't.

DC: Oh he was, OK. He was skilled trades.

MB: Mm-hmm. And so anyway, I didn't tell my husband that I went back. So, I went in and hired in and they—I can't remember even the money part, but I thought, "Oh my God, this is stupid for me to be working at the bank when I can make this kind of money!" So then they showed me—took me to the plant, showed me where I was going to go to work. And it was in that new department. And so anyway, I told my husband that night, I says, "Yeah, Pontiac Motor called me back." He said, "You're not going back." And I says, "Yeah, I'm going to go back." And he didn't like it. And I never said no more, but the next day I went to work. But I didn't tell him. He just thought I went to hire in. I already had hired in. I went back to work and I said to myself, "Boy, why would I even *consider* not. . . ." you know. And I mean, because I'm used to working in a plant. It would be different—if I was brand new, I would have never done it. But I'm used to it because I already had a taste of it during the war and everything—everything—and then of course with the union representing you, you know, that's a lot. That's a lot!

DC: That meant something to you at that point in time?

MB: Huh?

DC: Did that mean something to you in 1957?

MB: Oh yes, because see I'd already been there from '53 and I knew the difference between '53 and '49, I mean '45 and '44. So anyway—and I'd had many of those disputes, you know. So anyway, so I goes back to work, and I'm working on the job next to the job that I had when—at one time. And I got to talking to the guy, and I says, "So where'd you come from?" He said, "Oh, I just hired back in." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "I hired in about six weeks ago." I said, "You did?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "But you got less seniority than I have." And I just got back that day! So what am I doing? Get back hired the first day and I'm already calling the committeeman. [laughs]

DC: Absolutely, yeah.

MB: So anyway, committeeman came and he says, "Yes." So he went, of course you know, they dicker back and [forth] with management, you know. And he says, "Margaret, you got a grievance here." He says, "If you want to sign a grievance," he says, "you'll get some back pay." And I said, "But what about the ones that didn't get called back that got more seniority than me?" He says, "Well, if they do sign the grievance, the highest seniority on the grievance *will* get the pay." I said, "Well you better check. We better check." So he said, "Well ask. Go ask." Do you know that every single one of them said no, they didn't want to sign the grievance? So it was mine alone.

DC: Really? Why do you think they didn't want to sign?

MB: That's—see girls—women are like that. They just figure, "Well I'm glad to be back." They didn't really feel like—they didn't realize that they were giving up their *rights*. I mean, it's hard to tell people that, you know, sometimes. They just don't understand it. Like I told you, you know, I didn't realize that I was doing job—you know, like I was doing my job ahead of time, they gave it to two of us—see, those are the things you learn.

DC: Did you think you were different from the other women you were working with?

MB: Yeah. Yeah, I did. I did. Yeah. I did think that, not all of them, though. No, there was only a few.

DC: Only a few who were like you or only a few who just didn't care about their rights?

MB: They just didn't want to be bothered.

DC: Only a few who didn't want to be bothered?

MB: Yeah.

DC: So do you think most of the women then were willing to stand up for their rights?

MB: No, they didn't *know* they had rights. And I'd try and explain to them, you know, that you have a *right*, you know. "Well, I'm kind of happy the way things are." I said, "Well, it's up to you because if I have to do this alone, I'm going to do it alone." [dog begins barking in background] Tia!

DC: Just trying to make sure she gets to be part of the conversation.

MB: [to Tia, the dog] Lay down. Right there. I know, I like you baby. Go lay down, I know you're doing your job.

DC: So what happened with the grievance?

MB: Oh, so I signed the grievance alone.

DC: And did you get your back pay?

MB: Oh yeah. But before I got the back pay, I mean, they really gave me the jobs.

DC: Oh, they worked you over, huh? Tell me what they did.

MB: Phew! [laughs] They put—they gave me a job that I had to actually put my hands in oil all the way up to here!

DC: All the way up past your elbow?

MB: Yeah.

DC: Oh man.

MB: I mean, every job that they gave me, every day it was a different job.

DC: So you never had a chance . . .

MB: So you don't really get a chance to *learn* the job. Oh they were awful. I called the committeeman all the time. I thought, "I'll be a mosquito on your back. You'll want to get rid of me." And, you know, that's just about what you are sometimes when you call a committeeman all the time—you are a mosquito on their back, you know.

DC: Well how did the committeemen respond?

MB: Oh, they'd come right away. Oh, they're for me.

DC: OK, they were.

MB: Oh yeah, definitely. That's why they got the job, too—I was keeping them busy. [laughs]

DC: So how long did they do this to you? How long did it take?

MB: So anyway, it just went on, maybe about four, five weeks. But they—it wasn't that they put it on the shelf. There was dickering there, you know.

DC: Did you have any hearings?

MB: Yeah, finally the superintendent wanted to see who this girl is. I wouldn't give. Oh, I wouldn't. They wanted me to settle for less. I said, "No, I want the whole." And the committeeman says, "It's up to you, Margaret. I'm on your side, no matter what you choose." So anyway, they wanted to—well how about giving you two weeks, you know, this pay, back pay. "No, I want the whole shoot and caboodle." And so I wouldn't give. And the committeeman would have to go back. I mean, there was always something that they were coming back to do this or do that—the company. But the committeeman come back to me, and I'd say, "No. I want my back pay."

DC: So he would just report back the latest offer.

MB: Right, right. So they were dickering back and forth.

DC: But it sounds like the committeeman didn't put pressure on you to settle for less.

MB: No, he didn't. No, no.

DC: He gave you the opportunity, but . . .

MB: Yeah, but yeah, and I said no. And I always asked him, too, "What do you think?" He said, "It's up to you, Margaret. I'm on your side," or whatever. So anyway, finally the superintendent said he would like to meet me. And so the committeeman came down and he said, "He wants to meet you." I says, "Where?" And he said, "In his office." I says, "Tell him to come down here." And the committeeman looked at me and laughed. And I say, "If he wants to meet me, I'm on the job." But the committeeman thought well, I'd like to get off the job and go to the office. But I didn't. I said, "Make him do what I want!" That's how I felt.

DC: You wanted him to do what you wanted, OK.

MB: Yeah. Yeah, that's how I felt. You know, because he's giving me the runaround and they didn't do me right by hiring these other people in there when they got less seniority than me. And they were men. So anyway, so the superintendent did come down and he met me on the job. And the committeeman was there, too, and my foreman was there. But the foreman even thought to himself, "Who does she. . "—I know he was thinking, "Who does she think she is?" But I—and I wasn't mean about it, but I just wanted that done. I *demanded* that—my rights.

DC: And what did the superintendent say when he came down?

MB: So, and he says, "I'm—my name is Don . . ." I remember his first name but I—I can't remember his last name. Don. So I said, "Oh, I'm Margaret Beaudry." And he says, "I wanted to see you in the office." He says, "Was there any reason that you didn't want to come and meet me?" I said, "No, no reason at all except that you wanted to meet me. So then you could come to me if you want to meet me." He says, "Well, that's all right." So we got to talking and he was nice. And he was kind of stupid. Why did he want to meet me? You know what I mean? I wouldn't give an inch, you know. I suppose that was why. But anyway, the committeeman told me afterwards, he says, "I had to meet that girl. I wanted to find out who would not give." He says . . .

DC: Is that what the superintendent said?

MB: Told the committeeman that. The committeeman came and told me. He says—and he said, "I had her pictured like she was a real big lady and that, with red hair!" [laughs] You know, they say people with red hair, that they're, you know—oh yeah, they just won't give, you know, they are fighting. He says, "What a little tiny thing she was." He had to look down on me, you know. But anyway, yeah, so I got my pay. I got my back pay because all the rest of them did not sign. So I was the one that got it.

DC: So if someone with more seniority had signed, then . . .

MB: They would've got it. And let me tell you, as I said to the committeeman when I got my

check, I said, "Should I show it to them?" He said, "Show it to them. They weren't helping you out a bit." And so anyway, I did, too, and boy, you know, they didn't like it, either. I mean, they kind of were, "Who does she think she is?" I *know* that's how they felt. But they didn't act it. I mean, they didn't say anything but I knew they felt it.

DC: So they weren't happy for you.

MB: No, they were not happy for me at all. And I said to them, I said, "You know, I'm . . ." So of course, and then I told them that I was offered the committeeman's job and I'm going to do it only for you, because I fight for my own rights. But I am going to take the job because I think women do need a woman to fight for them. And I will be on the alert, and I will see that they are not going to show partiality—the management. See, and what can the union do if you don't call them for something that they're doing? But see, a lot of those women just didn't really know what their rights were. And—but they found out when I was the committeeman.

DC: So did you become the committeewoman right then, at that point in time?

MB: Not right away, but I—there was an opening, so I took it.

DC: A little while later?

MB: Yeah. Yeah. So I told them that I was going to, too. And they thought that was a good idea. They knew I was fighting for them. But they just didn't want to take no chances.

DC: OK, didn't want to take chances. Didn't want to make the boss angry?

MB: Well see, that's why women had—it took them so long to get their rights because the women didn't fight for their rights. You always have to have somebody fight for you, you know what I mean? But you have to stick together.

DC: How many fighters were there amongst the women?

MB: Oh, there might've been about—all of us women that were working there, I would say there might have been about four of us.

DC: And how many women were working there?

MB: [softly] Oh, there was about thirty or so.

DC: Talking about your department.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But, yeah, they fought, you know, but a lot of them fought— you know who they fought against? Their own fellow employee. And that is not right.

DC: What would they do to fight against their fellow employee?

MB: Well, for one thing, they'd say, "Well, I can do that job better than him. I can do more for"—her—"do more than she can do. Why can't you give me a chance at that?" And you know, it was causing friction, so the manager would say, "Yeah, well let's just change jobs around." You know, that kind of stuff.

DC: Then the workers are scrapping with each other.

MB: Yeah. And that's what I always preached to them that we got to stick together, us women! I said, "We're in here working and, hey, there was a time when we didn't . . ." I said, "It's women like me that are fighting for all these rights and you're getting the benefits and I'm getting all the dirty end of the stick." But I didn't care, because I was fighting for myself, too.

DC: What was it like being a committeewoman?

MB: It was good, because you know, I always had the union backing me. You know? I was safe.

DC: Was that a full-time job, just to be the committeewoman?

MB: No, I had to still do the job. Oh yeah, I had a job to do.

DC: OK, so you had your production job still.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK.

MB: Later on through the years, the committeeman was so busy most of the time that he didn't, but at that time the committeewomen or men weren't that busy.

DC: Can you remember any cases that you worked on?

MB: Yeah [chuckling], I worked on a case where—this is the only one that really sticks in my mind. We had canteen areas where you could get pop or whatever you want, you know, on your breaks, go and get something to eat. Well this one guy, he was getting free stuff and they were trying to figure out who, and I didn't know anything about this. I was the committeewoman. But he was putting slugs in the machine, getting stuff. And they were trying to figure out who it was. Because that was—that's kind of a federal offense. And so anyway, he called me and, you know, I told him, I said, "I'm a staunch union member. I'm your committeeman and everything, but I ain't going to fight for somebody that's doing something against—it's a federal offense." And ooh he was mad. And he really gave me—you know, he really swore at me and everything. But I told him right out, I'm for the worker but you are doing something wrong. So that's the only incident I ever really—but I got called for other little, petty little things, you know?

DC: What were the most frequent kind of issues that came up?

MB: Well, it would be if a person was switched from one job to another that they had been doing and why did they give it to another person? And so those other things—and then you usually ironed it out. They got their job back and they just didn't—thought that maybe she would like this job. You know, they always had their own story. But they, you know—I—we usually got our job back in a case like that.

DC: It sounds like you could settle those without filing a formal grievance.

MB: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK. You would just talk to them.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Was it different handling cases for men as opposed to handling cases for women?

MB: No. They were the same.

DC: About the same. All right.

MB: Yeah. But I, it really wasn't—it was a department where it just kind of ran kind of smooth. I mean, there wasn't that many calls. And then there would—the calls would be because the boss wouldn't give a person a day off, you know, like for a vacation day or, you know, stuff like that. And then you could just talk and dicker with them.

DC: You said that one of the reasons you wanted to be a committeewoman was to help defend the rights of women.

MB: Yeah.

DC: Were there times when you did that?

MB: No. Never. No everything was fine. I mean, it just seemed like—I don't know if the company knew that I was going to fight for the women or not. I really don't know. But I didn't really. I mean, it was just like as if I didn't have the job.

DC: Was there the same boss there, or a different boss?

MB: Yeah, they were the same.

DC: The same boss who had been causing these kinds of—the same one that made you dip your arm in oil and all that?

MB: Yeah.

DC: And there still weren't any problems after you were in charge.

MB: No, no. And then—so then that's when I put in—I resigned. So I wasn't a committeewoman very long.

DC: How long were you a committeewoman?

MB: I would say about six months. And I resigned because I heard that—the committeeman over in [Plant] 15 told me that they were hiring other people from different plants to come to—they were transferring people from other plants to come to 15 and that he thought I had a right to come if I wanted to. And I said, "I want to come."

DC: That was back in the small presses.

MB: Mm-hmm.

DC: OK, and you wanted—was your motivation because of the kind of work?

MB: Yeah, I liked Plant 15. I don't know—it was clean and they had nice restrooms and—I don't know. It just was nice. I liked it. It was better.

DC: So you had to resign your committeewoman position in order to take the job.

MB: Yeah. Oh yeah.

DC: OK. Did you ever think about becoming a committeewoman again?

MB: No. I never wanted to because we had good union reps except when Bonnie came over—hired in in 1962 I think it was. Like I told you, I don't think Bonnie even realized it but I was instrumental in getting her her job, into the union. Because a lot of the girls didn't like her. She was brand new and she was young. And I took her under my wing because I'm old enough to be her mother. And so we worked together, Bonnie and I. And I talked her into running for committeewoman. I said, "Oh Bonnie, you would be such a good—I think women should get in." And I says, "I can't because of my husband." You know, I'll tell you the truth: I really resigned because of my husband. He didn't really like me mingling with—you know, somebody calling me—all the men and the women calling. I always kept that kind of quiet, in the union part. But I thought it would make our relationship better if I got out of that department and went back to where I was, you know, in the small press. So it was really a—uh, personal for me. And so I talked Bonnie into running. "Oh Margaret, these girls don't like you." I said, "Bonnie, they all like me. I'll work for you real quietly, and tell them what a great person you would be."

DC: How long had Bonnie worked there before you talked her into being a committeewoman?

MB: I think maybe a year or two.

DC: Really quickly, then. That's not very long before being put in that kind of position.

MB: No, no. And I can't say for sure the date, because I don't pay any attention to dates then, you know? But it wasn't long after she came to work there. Because some of the girls became really good friends of hers that I actually—didn't like Bonnie, and I talked them into voting for her. So when we had the election, I went around wherever I could and—[dog barks again] Tia, stop it! Stop it, go lay down baby. She wants us to know she's there.

DC: Were there any other layoffs? A lot of people got laid off, I know, in the 1958-59 recession. Did you get laid off then, too? What did you do then?

MB: I got, yeah. Oh, for every layoff, I—did I go back? I think I went back to work for Neisner's.

DC: At that point you did, OK.

MB: Mm-hmm.

DC: Thank goodness for Neisner's!

MB: Yeah, but it was so easy to get back there because, you know, I knew them. There was always somebody there that I still knew.

DC: Do you remember how long you were laid off that time?

MB: Not very long.

DC: Was your husband laid off at all?

MB: No. He went to work there in '49.

DC: '49, OK. Never got laid off. Did he enter the skilled trades right then, in '49?

MB: No, he worked in the paint department. He sprayed cars. He—at that time—it's a different setup, right now, you know? But at that time you had to know how to use one of those spray guns. He was really good at it.

DC: He had been a painter, you said.

MB: Oh yeah. So he knew all about paints and that. He used to paint. He got a good job there. He painted all the show cars. He was that good. And so he put in for skilled trades to get into the paint department. And he got in.

DC: Did he have to do an apprenticeship then?

MB: No. Because he had worked with his Dad and he worked during the—during World War II he had worked with paints. And he had to prove it, of course. And he had to prove—he had to get—he didn't have to go through the schooling, like, to get the journeymen's paper, because of his experience. He got it through the hard paint, hardware stores and paint stores. And because of the service, when he was in the Air Corps, he also—he was a tail gunner in the planes, the war planes. But he also was the maintenance man on the planes. And he did, you know, like during World War II—I don't know if you know this or not, but they had to have, on bases, do this fancy painting for your squadron, whichever squadron it was in. And then also, every pilot had a insignia of his own that he wanted on his plane. And my husband used to do that.

DC: So with all that experience, he could just skip through the journeyman training.

MB: Real artistic, yeah. So they just automatically gave him—but he had—oh he had to get a lot of written stuff, you know, from the Army and everything. So he got in because of that. And that's when he was in business—after the war, see, he went into the painting business and he had a business of his own.

DC: That was up in Munising. Yeah, right.

MB: Mm-hmm.

DC: Well how did you organize your family life in Pontiac? How did you organize caring for the kids? I think you said at one point that a neighbor, was it, came over for an hour and a half.

MB: Yeah, she came across the street there.

DC: Right. But, I mean, how did that all work out?

MB: Well, for one thing, my daughter—she's old enough now and she's married. And I have these two boys. And she took care of them. So it was family.

DC: OK, so let's see, there was a long gap between . . .

MB: Mark was born in 1962.

DC: OK. So you had no children between 1946 and '62?

MB: No.

DC: OK, all right. There we go.

MB: So and then so she took care of them. Then I had the other boy, two, three years later after

Mark, which was ‘62, and the other one was ‘62, ‘63, ‘64, in ‘65. He was born in ‘65.

DC: OK. There’s a big generation gap.

MB: Yeah. So there’s only three years between the two boys. But my daughter took care of the boys. And then when they got old enough, then they stayed home instead of having to take them over to her house. The lady across the street used to come and be with them an hour and a half. Yeah.

DC: Now, would you and your husband work the same shifts?

MB: No. We were always on different shifts.

DC: How did you work that out?

MB: Well my husband had quite a bit of seniority so he could almost choose what he had to do. And then we—we’d go through the union and get the hardships. The union worked for us to get a hardship case. When my husband was on a job, maybe, that he couldn’t move—he was on a certain job that where he didn’t have a right to get on the night shift. Well see, but I—most of the time I’m on the night shift.

DC: Oh, you worked night shift most of the time.

MB: Oh yeah. See, because he had seniority to be able to stay on the day shift. And if he at one time, maybe, had to go on the night shift, then maybe the union helped me get on the day shift for a certain length of time. We call those hardships.

DC: Hardships, OK. All right. So would you begin, say, like at midnight or something? When would you begin work?

MB: No, I would start around 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon. So he’s on his way home and I’m on my way to work. We would pass each other. And my kids were on their way home from school.

DC: Then would your husband be with them after they got out of school?

MB: Yeah, he was with them. Oh yeah, he was with them all the time. And then, like, the kids were involved in all kinds of things, so that made it good for me that I could do those things with them when they were young. And then, of course when they got older, my husband did. But up until they got older, I took them to all their—one kid played football, one kid played tennis, and then from tennis he went to skating and from skating he went to baseball.

DC: I know that routine.

MB: Oh boy, I’m telling you. They were involved in all those things, my kids were.

DC: Well back in the ‘50's, you know, when your daughter would’ve been still very young, how did you organize the shopping, the cooking, the cleaning, the washing, all that stuff. In the ‘50's when your daughter was young.

MB: Yes, that was in ’53, I went to work at Pontiac Motor. Well, my brother—we had an apartment and my brother and his wife lived downstairs and I lived up—no, I lived downstairs and they lived upstairs. And my brother’s wife didn’t work. And so my daughter was—she was taken care of. But only when my husband, like maybe, would have to work on the same shift as me. That’s the only time she had—but see, we worked it; one was with her all the time.

DC: All right. Were you in charge of the housework? Did he help out with that at all?

MB: Oh yeah, he always helped out.

DC: He always helped out with that, OK.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. He did—I mean, he curled my daughter’s hair.

DC: Is that right?

MB: You know, we talk about that, laugh because she was—she must’ve been a good kid because she just sat there and it took him an hour to do her hair, you know, when I was gone, you know, to work. We laugh about that a lot. She says, “I remember when Dad used to take those . . .” I showed him how to do it. She had long hair, you know, and she—I—he’d take a rag and I showed him how to turn around this rag and how in the end you take the rag and—I just cut rags and make them into long curls and tie it. You wet it, and she’d go to bed; the rags didn’t hurt her head. And then he’d take—then in the morning when I’m there, I just take those rags out. I just pull it out, she’s got a long curl. So, if we had to switch it around and I had to put those rags in, you know—but she said, she used to say, “Oh God I hated it when Dad says, ‘Time to put that rags in your hair!’” You know, it was a joke. [laughing] And she said, “But he did it!” And she says—of course, my husband was a perfectionist, so when those rags were put in her hair, it was done right! It wasn’t just, you know, like this—like I would do. Yeah. So anyway—yeah so we had it, we worked out fine, with one of us was always with the kids. And it shows now, too, because we’re all still—even though he’s gone, we’re still real together. And my kids call me every day. I know when they’re going to call me. One, two, three. Just to say hello, if anything.

DC: Do they live around here now?

MB: Yeah, my daughter lives two streets over from me. And—but now the boy that was—I swear I thought it was him coming back when you came to the door, because he had just left.

DC: Oh, OK. So that’s what the dog thought.

MB: Yeah. And so anyway, he was just here and he just had to come for something and he stopped in for a minute. And then my other boy was in the Navy for six years and he stayed in Washington, in Spokane, Washington and Seattle for awhile. But he's—he got full custody of his son, and so they were having problems. It's hard for my son—you know, he's got to be a Mother, too. So I asked him to come home, to live. He said, "Ma, if I come home to live, I have to start all over again." I said, "Start all over again!" And I said, "You can live with Mother. And you won't have no trouble getting a job." And he didn't. He was in here three days and he had about six interviews.

DC: Is that right? OK, well that's good.

MB: Yeah. See, he's a manager of a Collex Collision in Rochester. So they're living with me until they get on their feet. Who knows, they might never get on, though I don't mind.

DC: Well that's good. Yeah. I was thinking, you informed me a lot about the relations between men and women in the plants, but what about race relations in the plants back in the '50's?

MB: I guess there was, with some people, but mostly the southern people. But never with us, the northern people. We just, we just work *with* them.

DC: Did you work with blacks?

MB: Oh yeah, I had lots of black friends.

DC: Black women and black men?

MB: Yeah. They were always—I got along good with them. I never had no problems with black people, *ever*. I always said, I wished all white people were as good as the ones I was involved with. They was good, you know what I mean? But there were—there's a lot of white people that are prejudiced. And I'm sure that the black people—now I worked with a black—well, I had more than two, but these two especially I remember. This one black girl, she said that she finds that black people are more prejudiced than the white. And I said, "Well how—why would you, why would you say that?" She says, "Well when I talk and get too friendly with a white person, there's always a black one that's there telling me, 'you're whitey,'" or you know how you know how. And I said, "Oh, really?" And she said, "Yeah." She says, "I have trouble that way. And yet," she says, "I'm working here with you guys and you white people treat me just nice." But they didn't seem to like that when—well that's what she told me. Now yet this other black girl, she was a real good friend of mine. I really liked her. But I found out that, you know, that she was prejudiced, too. But I never did let on. Through the grapevine, you know how you hear things. Yeah, so but I never had no trouble and—but the management, too, you know. I mean, a lot of times I gave information to my black friends, what was going on behind their back, through the grapevine, I got from management.

DC: Like what? What kinds of things?

MB: Like they were trying to catch them.

DC: Trying to catch the black people?

MB: Doing something that wasn't quite right, so they could give them a reprimand. And if they didn't like them, management seemed to think that they weren't—a couple of the guys weren't doing their job. And I informed them.

DC: How did you find out about these management ideas?

MB: Well, I don't know how I found out, but it just seemed like I knew what was going on. I did. I wasn't into *myself* that much. I was always ready to help other people.

DC: You mentioned that some of the southerners, the southern whites . . .

MB: Southern, even to this day, some of my real good friends are southerners. And I just kind of cringe sometimes. I like them so much. They were my real good friends. But every so often something comes out that they say against the black. I don't like it. Because I know a lot of white people that I don't think are right. You know what I mean? So it's—you know, I feel this way. They're not, they're not all alike, see? Just like all the white people aren't all alike. Not all the black people are, either. But maybe when it came down to, to the nitty gritty, maybe the black man would turn against me, if it had to be chosen between a black and a white. I don't know. But I wouldn't do that. I would stick up for the one that's right.

DC: Did you see the union supporting the rights of black workers in the 1950s?

MB: Oh, I thought that—in fact a lot of black people were really involved in the union. And they still are.

DC: Were there any black stewards or shop committeemen?

MB: Oh yeah, there's—right now there is. Yeah. Oh yeah. In fact, our local has—vice president is black. When I went in 1953, we had a black president.

DC: Of the union local?

MB: Yeah.

DC: Really? Who was that?

MB: Joe Murphy.

DC: Joe Murphy, OK. In 1953?

MB: Yeah—no that wasn't in 1953 because Cecil Mullinix [sp?] was president when I went to work there, in '53. Cecil Mullinix. And I think that Joe Murphy—I think ran against Cecil Mullinix around '55, I think, '56.

DC: OK. That's still the 1950's.

MB: Yeah. And he was the president. And then—I'm trying to think. Then there was, then there was Charlie Melton was the white president.

DC: Bonnie's husband, right?

MB: Yeah. And then, after Charlie, it was a black one again. That black one is in the International. He went up, way up in the International, that black one did. And then—and then, then—I'm trying to think of when the—Charlie—I can't remember what Charlie's name is. He's another black man that was the president.

DC: OK. So blacks were rising up into positions of leadership in the local.

MB: Oh yeah. Yeah. Now did you know all those black men are up there in the International now. Every black man that I know that was involved, that was a vice president—and then there were our union reps there that have offices, that are black, in the—right in the union hall. And some of them have already gotten positions up there. But we got some black people in there right now—but the vice president is black. And I think the co-vice chair—he might—no I don't think he is, no. I think he went up the ladder. But I never noticed that, you see. I worked with them and I got along fine with them. And the ones I got along—I mean, that I work with, they're funny as can be. They—you know, jolly. Very jolly. And I don't know, I just felt—I was never prejudiced. It's odd that some of my best friends are, and I don't like it.

DC: This is just off the subject completely, but I was wondering what your maiden name was?

MB: Hill.

DC: Hill. Just Hill, OK.

MB: Yeah. H-I-L-L.

DC: All right, yeah. I didn't know if—OK, just for the sake of reference. Can you think of other questions I should've been asking you that I haven't asked you?

MB: No, I can't think of it. Only thing is that I worked there for almost forty years. Oh, and the union did get that for me. One of the things they got me, which was great—the time I worked, I think from—what was it forty—wait a minute now. I went to work at Truck and Bus, Yellow Cab—what year was that then? There's a time in there during the war that the union got me that added to my seniority.

DC: Right, OK.

MB: So I—which I . . .

DC: You weren't a union member officially, but you worked there.

MB: Yeah. And I got that time added to my retirement so that I got maximum.

DC: Ah, all right!

MB: So see? You know, though, you know that's why I say—you know, I'll be honest with you, I got a couple relations that maybe aren't union, you know. They really irritate me. But I pick up—when I find a article that pertains to the union, you know—once in awhile you'll see, hear, a good—you'll see a good write-up about the union. I make sure they get to read it, because they have benefited by—you know that. I mean, what would this world be if there was no union? These people stuck together to gain rights for us. Where would I be if there was no union? I wouldn't be getting this good pension. I wouldn't be getting these medical benefits. I mean, look at the perks there that they've fought—and we fought! We had to fight. And the younger membership has been handed everything on a silver platter, but they're going to find out. They'll find out, eventually. They're a little bit lax when it comes to, you know, the union, too, you know. And that irritates me, because we fought hard to get where we're at. And we're giving them the rights on the silver platter. And that's what gets you—you have to make them see that. And it's hard for them to see it some, the younger ones. They got the job and they don't realize that if it wouldn't have been for us, they might not have that job because they might've been fired in between.

DC: Mm-hmm. Just like you might have several times in your career.

MB: Oh, I know I would've because, see, they didn't like fighters like me. Yeah, they used to call us the Communist party, for God's sake!

DC: The Communist Party!

MB: Yeah! [laughs]

DC: When was that? When did they call you that?

MB: Well, you know, they—that's what a lot of people thought, that the union—they, you know, because, you know, they said, "Well that's their business. Why should you—you're working for them." Yeah, but you wouldn't be working for them long. Where would we be? It's helped every—you know, just like I told my grand—my son-in-law. He's on management, you know. I says, "Oh Bud," I says, "you wouldn't have all these benefits if we wouldn't have voted for them because they don't want you to get unionized for the simple reason that they're going to make themselves look good, that they're giving you that stuff. You wouldn't be—have getting at it if we hadn't fought for ours. They *have* to give it to you now."

DC: Otherwise the union workers would be having a better package than somebody getting salary.

MB: Yeah. So I said, so if you saw for [end of tape]

End of Interview