Interview with James McGuire
Mr. McGuire's wife, Mary, was also present
Local 849 Union Hall, Ypsilanti, Michigan
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Transcribed by Marie O'Brien
Copyedited by Daniel Clark

JM: I know, but I had—I was working on heat pumps in Florida.

MM: And he worked in the coal mines.

JM: I worked in the coal mines, but that had nothing to do with Walter Reuther or anything.

DC: No, no, no, no. Don't worry about that.

MM: That's background music.

JM: Now that was—members of . . .

DC: The Walter Reuther Archives is just the name—that's the name. They house . . .

JM: He was a UAW man.

DC: Oh sure.

JM: But now, when I worked in the coal mines, we were a United Mine Workers . . .

DC: John Lewis.

JM: Yeah, John L. Lewis. Now he was in charge of that at that time. And then that was in another Summer—Summersville, or something like that, wherever that took place.

DC: Well, we'll sneak up and try to—try to move into those issues.

MM: Chronological order.

DC: Well, it never tends to work out perfectly chronological . . .

MM: No. But . . .

DC: . . . but it helps us kind of keep things . . .

MM: yeah, build it up until you get to where you really want to go.

DC: That's what we're going to try to do. But I need you both—did I give you—did I give you both sheets or not? No, here's the other one. OK, so here's the actual release, and . . .

JM: Well, that's just a form.

DC: Yeah. What that does is it gives you permission to use your own words any old way you see fit, but it also gives other researchers the right to use that information without threat of a lawsuit. That's what it's about. And so, we can wait until we're done and decide if . . .

JM: This is—this is to protect you and me and everybody else, right? It's not really worth much—it's just a protection order.

DC: Exactly. And so, if when we're done you'd be willing to sign that, then that would make your words available . . .

JM: Well, there's nothing to that. I can sign it.

DC: That's good. Now or later—it doesn't matter. I don't know if you—we can wait, if you want. As log as I don't forget.

JM: Yeah, don't forget when we leave. Before we leave, I've got to sign mine.

DC: Then I'll make a photocopy of it and get it back to you, and I think it says on the bottom of one of those sheets, that if you'd like a copy of the tape or transcript, I'll get those to you. I'll get you a copy of the release and send that right back to you—as soon as I get up to school and can use their copy machine.

JM: Oh, you can mail that back anytime.

MM: I used to—I used to teach—I don't know.

JM: That was her job. She was an executive in that outfit.

DC: OK.

MM: I used to teach, and what I taught was basic income tax. Because I used to do income tax, and I did IRS audits.

DC: Oh!

MM: Oh yeah! [laughs] I was involved in that. I've retired from that now, but . . .

DC: It sounds pretty stressful.

MM: [laughs] But I used to do a lot of them.

DC: All right. Well anyways, I have pages of questions written down, and some of them may end up being useful and some of them may not be relevant, but I'll just listen to what

you're saying as best I can and see what I should be following up on, and what we can talk about. But Mary was absolutely right, the first thing I want to know is, where were you born? And you've already tipped me off a little bit, it's West Virginia somewhere . . .

JM: Yeah, it's Boone County.

DC: Boone County.

MM: He wants the city, Jim.

JM: Boone County, and you want to put down Prenter, P-R-E-N-T-E-R. And Boone County, and it's West Virginia.

DC: In West Virginia, OK. And, if you don't mind me asking, when was that? When were you born?

JM: What was that?

DC: When were you born?

JM: 1925.

DC: 1925, OK.

JM: February 2nd.

MM: February 6th.

JM: February 6th.

DC: I was going to say, Groundhog's Day there. OK—were your parents from West Virginia also?

JM: Uh, yeah.

DC: OK. Had they lived in that town their lives?

JM: No, my Mother was from Rainelle [northeast of Beckley] and my Dad was from Lewisville [Lewisburg, WV?, Lewisville, Ohio? Can't find L'ville, WV]. He was born in Lewisville.

DC: OK. What brought them to Prenter?

JM: Well, he worked a lot of jobs, and you know, Prenter happened to be a coal-mining job, and he was there in 1925. And then he went away to several other jobs, just like young boys do. He went to several other jobs, different jobs every year, wherever the work is. And then he went back to Prenter later, back in the '30's. 1929 he got back, that's only four

years later, and in the meantime he's been in about five different towns. He'd moved from about five different towns.

DC: Did you move with him?

JM: Oh yeah. And I can remember each one of the towns, at that one time.

DC: Do you remember what any of them were like?

JM: Oh yeah.

DC: Can you describe them?

JM: Huh?

DC: Can you describe what it was like in some of those towns?

JM: Well, they were—one town was—had an old store that had been torn down. That coal company had moved out. And it was—it was quite a little town. He raised a little garden there to help feed—had their own food. And I guess he made it just like all the rest of them.

DC: Were these all coal towns, where your father worked?

JM: Well the coal—yeah, it's a coal town. And he was a carpenter at that time. He did work with his uncle, and that was back in, well, 19—say 1927. I'm only two years old. And then, when I was three—when I was one year old, I was old enough to walk outside and I wanted—my brothers were picking up marbles, and I wanted to pick them up, too. They wouldn't let me. Afraid I would eat them.

MM: He's one of eleven. And then there was thirteen.

JM: So, anyway, that was—I can't name the little old town—Whittaker, or something like that [about twenty miles southeast of Charleston, now called Gallagher]. And we lived "up the holler." We lived—you know, there is a holler down there. There's quite a few of them. Every time you moved, a holler—you lived in a holler. Up the Kanawha River. And I never forgot. I even—I knew it months ago—I knew all those little towns, but I'd have people come up and—you know what I mean? I can't come up with the towns now.

DC: It sounds like your Mother must have been pretty busy.

MM: [laughing] She was!

JM: Well, like, I had a brother that was born in [?]bridge, and there was a brother—I guess he was born in, maybe, Clothier. No, he wasn't born in Clothier, that was—he was born over in—I can't think of the town, up the holler.

DC: Sure, that's OK. Was your Mom busy with the children, then, or what all did she do?

JM: Well, she only had four boys at that time. The baby was the youngest boy, see, and so you know that they were kind of—well, there was a little shortage of—I suppose there was a shortage of money. Or it was hard to make a living. You know, my Dad didn't—he—they didn't make much money back in them days. He worked for a dollar an hour, even in 1932. A dollar an hour is all they made in 1932. Everybody in town makes a dollar. That's at set wages. So, whatever—if you worked over sawing logs for somebody, that would have—that would be extra money. You know what I mean?

DC: Sure. That would've been in the Depression, too. So any extra money would have been valuable.

JM: So anyway, that was back in the days and then one of my cousins, her Mother, their Mother, kind of had a mental problem. And we kept C[?] and Danny—was the two younger brothers, so we got to keep them.

DC: OK, so that expanded the family.

JM: Yeah. So they stayed with us. They stayed with us on the—we had a house with a big [center?] porch on the back of the house, up against the hillside. It was a big—porch was full-length, so that was our playground. Do you know what I mean? And when I was first got there, I guess we got in that house twice, maybe. The first time, I started walking out through there and the snow was up over my head, and I had to follow the path, and they said, "You're not supposed to be out here." So they picked me up, carried me back in. I'm able to walk, and they whip you. I walked out through the path—there was only the path, so big. Shoveled path. But anyway, that was—you know, you remember all those things that happened.

DC: Sure. Do you remember school at all?

JM: I didn't go to school until I got to—I didn't go to school, and we moved in 1929 to Prenter, and we moved in 8 room—8, 9, and—8 and 9, and 10 rooms. Rooms 8, 9, and 10. In the old white house. It was a white house. It was a three—a three-story building and it had washed down the road. It had washed all the way through town back in 1925, I guess it was. It had washed all the way down through town and it's setting in this—in the creek bed, with the creek running around both sides of it, like it's a big pile of rock.

DC: I'm surprised there was a house there!

JM: It was a well-placed place for it to sit. And it sit there until, I don't know when they tore it down. But we had 8, 9, and 10 rooms there, and my Dad bought us all sheepskin coat—all three of us, we had a sheepskin coat with a fur collar. And that's where we were—my brother went to school there at that time. Well, the school was out the holler, and I didn't get to go to school until 8 ,9, and 10—we moved up to House 11. And finally we moved to

House 12. And when I got into 12, then I was old enough, I was six years old—and I got to go to school, from House 12.

DC: Now when you say House 12, that means you're moving up the holler? I'm not quite following which--

JM: Well, 8, 9, and 10 is one room in one house. Now, 11 was a house in a—two rooms in houses—that was company houses, four-room houses.

DC: OK. I got you now.

JM: So, we moved up to 11, and the next year we moved up to House 12. It was a better house, that's why they're up—up there.

DC: So you could keep moving up the way there.

JM: Yeah, it was 12. You'd think you'd move next door to 11. Well 11 is one side and 12 is way up the road on the other side. The roads was about six houses that wasn't on that side, looks like it wasn't built. It was six houses, because there was room for six houses. But instead they put garages over there. See. Garages for everybody. And the garages would begin—they made—finally made—uh, one of them was a welder, a man run—had a welding shop in that one. See? And the other one, I don't know what all it was, but anyway there was—they had cows back in them days. They had end—end houses always liked to have their cows. It makes better room to have cows—and they had a pig across the creek and everything like that. You'd have to have a cow, and you'd have to have a pig. If you don't have a pig, you don't have pork in the winter. You know that? We had a pig every year. We had our own.

DC: Did you have to help slop the pigs, and all that stuff?

JM: Well, yes, we could go around and collect leftovers. Each has a bucket on the fence or a bucket on somewhere for you to take and dump it in your bucket, and keep going all the way around and you fill up the rest full of water, and you feed the pig.

DC: Now would you share some of the pork then with people who didn't have pigs—that would give you the slops?

JM: No, this is leftover scraps. And whatever the pig could eat, it would be OK, because we—it was—in nine months a pig is full-grown, you know what I mean? They're 400 pounds. So we want to fatten them up. That was our job.

DC: Do you remember any other jobs you had as a child?

JM: Well, now, I ran—this is when I was just younger. I went around hoeing peoples' gardens. I could hoe peoples' garden and I had four paper routes. That took me about—I took up three paper routes. I had three paper routes of the *Charleston Gazette,* because they

couldn't find anyone else big enough, or enough to run the paper. I'll take it. I'd get out at 5:00 in the morning and deliver papers. And we had one *Pittsburgh Press*, and that was seventy-five papers, only once a week, though. Just once a week. And I took—that was my brother's paper route. So when he left, I got that one.

DC: Wow. It sounds pretty busy. How old were you when you were doing all those paper routes?

JM: Mmm—up to the time I was eleven. I wasn't old enough to get in the Scouts when I was—I wasn't old enough to get in the Scouts.

DC: So you had a monopoly in the paper business in town.

JM: Yeah. Not only that, but I knew how to operate it. I took five trips. One to Washington D.C., four to this Coney Island. They were 200-mile, 200 dollars, 200-mile trips.

DC: Was this from being a paper carrier?

JM: From the paper.

MM: But the way he did it.

JM: Yeah, it was the way you do that. I had the smallest route. It was only forty papers. The next route was sixty papers. And I'd take this forty papers and let it go down as far down as it can go, and nobody—don't ask nobody to take the paper. You just, you know, leave it like it is. They'll come out, have a big—'Get three new customers, we'll give you a pair of roller skates.' And before that, they'll give you a T-shirt with *Charleston Gazette* all over it. I didn't want either one of them. And the next thing that goes, when they get it up to—'We'll even give you a bicycle.' My brother, he won a bicycle. Well, what happens is, they let them all down. I don't listen to them. And then, they come up—'The one that gets the biggest percentage'—its easier, to get a biggest percentage on a forty route than it is on a seventy-five or a sixty. You know what I mean?

DC: School was working for you here.

JM: So I had a—I would let it go down, and I would grab these, all the paper that I can. Then I'd take three papers myself. I'd pay for them myself. You know what I mean? In other words, I'm paying this. Sure enough, I got and won the trip to Cincinnati, Ohio! Cincinnati's a long ways off from Prenter, 200 miles. And cars actually wouldn't run—if you drove to Cincinnati and back, you got to overhaul your car.

DC: Really, yeah. Is that because the roads were so bad?

JM: No. They had Babbitt bearings. [technology common before 1940]

DC: Babbitt bearings.

JM: You know, the Babbitt bearings in the motor?

DC: I'm not familiar with Babbitt bearings, but they don't sound very good.

JM: Well it is, it's a rod. A connecting rod. Instead of having an insert now, why they would have Babbitt—just like you'd take and put lead solder in it—well the Babbitt bearings would wear out. And my Dad, he had to go through Pennsylvania—Pittsburgh, one time. Had to go to Pittsburgh, him and his brothers, somewhere. Anyway, they had to overhaul the car on the way and it was cold weather and snowing. He had to take the bottom off the motor, and take the top off the motor and overhaul the motor. So you see, cars wasn't perfect back then. You didn't know that they still have Babbitt bearings?

DC: No, I don't know about Babbitt bearings, no.

JM: Yes, that's the trouble with being young.

DC: That's right. That's why I'm here. To talk to people who know about Babbitt bearings.

MM: But in the end, how many kids were there all together? How many children were there all together in the end?

JM: Well, my Dad had five boys, and they all lived until 1929—we lost the first boy, was next to me. And he died in 1929. And that's the only boy that ever died until just last year. And then they had five girls. He got kind of weak, and he got five girls.

MM: [laughing] Noo. And then you had . . .

JM: And then we had [?] and Danny. Tommy and Danny stayed with us. The other boy was old enough—the other boy was old enough to make his own living, so he made his own living.

DC: Wow, that's a full house.

JM: And we also—OK, now, we had another boy. You know, I forgot about him. We raised him until 1937. And the last time I seen him was in 1937. We was snake hunting. And my Mother says, "Don't you ever bring a rattlesnake home. They're too dangerous." She says, "Now don't you be catching them things." So anyway, we went and killed them off and everything like that and I was going to bring one home and he says, "No. Don't bring a live snake here." He says, "You'll get the worst whipping you ever had in your life." And I believe it. They would. Because they don't want me to—well, it's dangerous to hunt rattlesnakes. Right now they're coming out with a new rattlesnake. Did you know the new rattlesnakes are going to be twice as poison as the old ones?

DC: [skeptically] I'm not familiar with that.

JM: I know, but how are they upgrading themself?

DC: Well, evolution at work, I guess.

MM: It came out in the news here, just lately.

DC: I haven't read about it. OK, yeah.

JM: Yeah well, see? Back when you live in the woods—and if you lived in the woods, you know how things are. When we moved up, before I went to the service, we moved up in the holler. In 1937 was when we moved up in the holler. That's the last time I've seen—I done forgot his name now. How about that? I was with—I was raised up with him from, say, 1930 until '37—probably nineteen twenty—maybe in '29. But, anyway, he left and he didn't come back. He got a good job, I guess, somewhere else. But, it's hard to tell. He's probably not living. Raymond Baxter was his name. I guess something happened. Both of his parents was killed in an automobile.

DC: Your parents were.

JM: Both parents.

DC: Both of *his* parents?

JM: Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK.

JM: So they must have rolled—it doesn't have to be a collision. It could've been rolled over the hill, because the roads around the hill are not exactly perfect back then. They're only single lane.

MM: This large [hands close together, laughing].

JM: They were single lane roads. Even my mother, she was—when she died, she was still remembering that we were about to roll over that hill. And the hill would've been five hundred feet, or five hundred—would have been a thousand feet to the bottom. You know what I mean? That's a thousand feet. You know West Virginia, go down and look at the . . .

DC: I've gone through West Virginia a number of times because I did my graduate work at Duke down in North Carolina.

JM: Well just look, just look at where the expressways are, and you can see how bad going over the hills—you can see how deep the mountains were—the valleys were. Just take pictures of them.

M: Which I've done. His mother was an American Indian.

DC: Oh, OK.

JM: Well she was off the—the—Rainelle, why, it was the tribes. And they buried—they buried the tribe, five different bunches of the tribe—could have been five separate tribes, but they were still in the same tribe. Now the five different groups—call them groups, I guess you'd call it—they buried their possessions on my grandmother's farm. And then [?] Brown, he got the farm in 1932, because in 1932 was a Depression and nobody had a job. The jobs were just cut out half. What's the other half going to live on? They don't care what they live on. Well anyway, they—they got laid off. Fired is—back in them days. They didn't lay them off, because they just fired them. Well, anyway, my Dad didn't have no money to go to pay that—probably would have been a hundred dollars for taxes. But how you going to get a hundred dollar taxes if you haven't got a dollar?

DC: Right. Oh yeah.

JM: He was trying to make a living, something for us to eat. And he raised gardens up the holler. We had eleven little gardens, up and down that little holler where we lived in 1937. And we had—my Dad got a horse, to help us plow—help us to hoe the corn. The old plow would go along through the lanes, and the old horse helped out, helped out a whole lot.

DC: So that sounds like a way to get through the Depression.

JM: Well, that was one thing. And not only that, but we had a cow for milk. And everybody had a cow. They don't have a bunch of them. Our neighbors didn't have a cow—they had one. That's all you need. And if you had two, you'd have too much milk. You'd be dumping it out because you can't sell it or can't do something with it, or you'd try to sell it but that doesn't mean you'd get to sell it. Anyway, nobody had the money.

DC: I imagine no one had a refrigerator, either.

JM: Uhhh—refrigerator, and my Dad had a washing machine with a—that was a electric motor on it. So he put a gasoline motor on it. He tore it out, fixed it up the way he want to and put a big board in there and he put a gasoline motor on it. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. You got a motor. You got a washing machine now, out on the back porch. You got a washing machine."

DC: That's clever.

JM: And, you know what I mean, a little gasoline motor on it. So that was probably '38, '39. And anyway, they had no electricity in the—up the holler. So, my Dad went and cut five telephone poles, I think it was, to get the electricity up, half a mile up the holler. You string it here and you string the wire over and you string the wire back here, and you finally get it up the holler. Took about five chestnut poles. Chestnuts are a blight, and there's no chestnut living. All it is, is dead trees. So, you go get—see, you go get stray, dead chestnuts. And the old horse would bring them down the holler. We'll plant those things

in the ground and he wired the house. You wire the house—you didn't have running wire now—you had rosettes and—rosettes and something else, that you drill a hole and you stick it through the rafter. And you feed the wire through it, that's the insulation—that was a rosette, I think it was. And the other one, I done forgotten what the other one was. But they—that was the way you wired the houses.

DC: So did your Dad get any help, then, to try to electrify the holler there? Did people help him plant those chestnut poles?

JM: No.

DC: He did it all himself?

MM: Yeah, all the kids.

DC: All the kids, OK. Yeah.

JM: All the kids. There—we were young boys but still we didn't, couldn't lift a pole or do nothing with it. But he managed to get them up. It's the same way you do your own stuff right now. My boy, he planted a big—he planted a big pole just yesterday—last week, he put in a big post. And they were 18 foot long, 4 by 6—6 by 6's. I think it's 4 by 6's. And they're 18 foot long. And you can't pick them up and get them up. But we managed to get them up and put them in.

MM: He's building a new home. This is his pole barn. First thing you do.

JM: Everything you do, you manage to do it yourself. We raised—we raised fodder on top of the hill. He bought some fodder up there on the top of the hill, where the other man over here on the other side was raising corn on top. All right? He says now the first frosty day, the first snowy day—the first frosty day you bring this fodder down. Well we take two shocks and tie them together, throw them off the hill and they'll fall twenty feet. And you jump on top of them and try to hit that twenty feet. You're hanging onto them when you jump. Just don't end upside down, or—the rocks were six inches square and two foot long. That's the ones that came rolling down behind us. And then there was big flat ones and there's all kinds of rock, just nothing but rock—no dirt. On that first shelf, twenty feet down. And we did it. We thought it was fun. My brother, he's coming down and I hollered at him that, "There's a rock following you!" He turns around and looks and then he hit a tree. He hit a tree. You know, you rolled your fodder over, to one side or the other, to try to keep from, you know, to keep it from going, hitting the tree. And he looked back behind him, seen that big rock rolling behind him and hit the tree.

DC: You take your pick—rock or tree—geez.

JM: Well we carried that fodder down, to feed the cow. We also had a—coal mines at that time. The coal mines, they used them for prospecting. They want those holes dug in the side so they can get back in there deep as they can get, and get the coal to get a sample of

it. And they tell you what kind of coal it is. You know they know what kind of coal it is—they know what seam it is. But, you know, they still would like to have a sample every so often. So anyway, we finally then dug another—my Dad dug another coal—went down the other, down closer to the house. That one's too far up the holler. See. You just find anything—you find something like that, why, you take it.

DC: Sure.

JM: You use the coal, and that coal was to heat the house. How's that?

DC: Well, my grandfather heated his house with coal until the 1980s I think, so I know how that goes.

JM: But my mother, she was picky. And she don't—she says coal will burn a biscuit before it makes it done. She wants wood. So she—in her cook stove, we sawed wood. Yeah, we had to saw wood every other day.

DC: So you were busy.

JM: Well, that wasn't only me. It was my brothers and all that was all right in with it. They were busy doing something else. Somebody has to feed the chickens, somebody has to feed the horse, somebody has to feed the cow, somebody has to do something.

DC: What was it like for you Mother, and for you, being of Native American heritage down there?

JM: Well, my Mother—there's no stores close, so she has to go—she asks her neighbor, gets her neighbor, to take a pickup truck to go up to the top of the hill, which is about—I'd say it was maybe twelve miles away. Besides up the hill. The hill's maybe four or five miles long, getting up the hill. And I was talking, you know, the holler. See, it was something like that. I've forgot now. Anyway, you go up the hill, and it's pretty hard to climb on that hill. Anyway, you go up there, and you gets groceries. And she gets a sack of beans—that's to feed us—she gets a sack of middlins [side meat, salt pork] to feed the hog. She gets a sack of corn, or—and anything, they all come in sacks. Well it was cheaper to go up there to get it than it was to go somewhere else. The company store had fifty-eight cents for a can of corn. Well they know that their prices was high. But, you know, they don't care. Anyway, for a dollar you could feed—you'd get—I go to the store, I walk around, it's a mile and a half around to the company store. And then down this holler and up the other holler. And you—if you're going to get—go to the company store, you get a dollar, and for 58 cents I think it was, you get a ten-pound, or twenty-five-pound bag of flour. It takes ten cents for Clabber Girl baking powder. It takes four cents a day for carbide. You know, you'd working, using the carbide in the coal mines. He has to have four cents worth of carbide every day. Four cents was a little bag, those little nickel bags of carbide. If he asked for five cents, he'd probably say, "I can't put five cents in the bag," so we'd get to have four. Your problem—you know, I mean, might've been a reason for four cents. And if he counted up to a dollar, well that's what we spent when we go to the store. It was

flour, and it's possible, baking powder, and four cents worth of carbide. And I don't remember what the other stuff was, but anyway it was probably the same stuff. And you get your main food from the other, you know, from the main—once a month.

DC: Sure. Get your bulk supplies up there.

JM: Well, she goes and the other people go the same way. And you get—that sack of beans will last a long time. And a little chunk of bacon goes in it. You take a chunk of—you raise your own hogs. They're in the smokehouse. So you put a little chunk of bacon in them, and your beans is good. And that's the bacon we got. We didn't get fat on it. We didn't get fat on it, but we stayed healthier than some of the other people. The *city* women, they got their groceries, you know—the doctors—there was a doctor—there was four of them in town. The doctor lived in one house and the secretary of the company, whatever, he lived in the next house. And the other one was like a secretary, and the one was a—managing money. You know what I mean, there's a money manager—whatever it was—he's a secretary. But anyway, there's four of them. Four houses for those rich people. Well, they'd buy a bicycle every year and we'd never had a bicycle. We had to get them some other way.

MM: By the newspapers. [laughs]

JM: By the newspapers—a little old bicycle with no—just one bar in it.

DC: Sure, yeah.

JM: But it, we got—we wore the tires out of them things. Delivering papers. And that was one reason why we did—we delivered papers and that was an extra nickel. But actually I didn't get a bit of, penny of it. It was—my Mother got the money. That's OK with me. She made good use of it. Think she probably could make more use of it than I could.

DC: I'm still curious to know if you even were aware of being of Indian heritage?

JM: It's what?

DC: You said your Mother was an Indian, Native American.

JM: Yeah.

DC: I was just wondering what—if that was of any consequence, down there in West Virginia.

JM: Well, my Dad didn't allow us to, never did allow us, to go back—and I have never been back yet—to where my Mother was born, where my Mother was raised, or where there were Indian people. I got—one day, I was—one day when we went back, we went to her grandmother's place, which is real close to the outside of town. And it was two and a half miles up the holler. And here I am, three years old, so that would've been about '27, 1927. I was only—I was only three years old at that time. And I told them, that's five miles we

walked. I had to walk, because the others get the carriage. I—that's a long walk. My brother got the carriage. Well then I had to walk. OK, it was OK with me. I was three years old, big enough to walk. I walked two and a half up and two and a half back, and they said, "How did you know that that's five miles?" I says "well," says, "I had two halves of this here, and you'd get a half." I guess we'd cut apples in two. Enough to know that there's a half and a half! And I'm only three years old. And they says, "You haven't even gone to school yet, and you know 2 ½ and 2 ½ is 5!" I knew my apples before I went to school!

DC: I guess so. That's pretty smart.

JM: Well anyway, they asked, you know, they thought that was something big. I was not—I was just about as dumb as any and all the rest of them. You know what I mean? I'm not any smarter than anyone else. But yet I was—started at three. If they—if you can start teaching kids [?]in them days, that they can be almost a genius by the time they get to be seven years old. You know what I mean? And they'll graduate from high school when they're fif—when they're—graduate when they're fifteen, but they'll graduate from college when they're fifteen. You've seen them, haven't you?

DC: Well, I have, but they had a hard time adjusting socially sometimes.

JM: That's what I mean. They make geniuses out of them.

DC: Do you ever remember any union activity at the coal mines?

JM: Union?

DC: Yeah.

JM: Well, we went to the union. We went—also in 1934 we had—nobody had a job. Nobody had a job. If you got extra food, you helped your buddy, your neighbors. I've eaten other people's food. And we helped each other. And the whole town—we was the only one that had a—was using our cook stove to cook on. Because they'd just bring the cook stove out, and took the gas out of it and put grates in it, and put wood in it. How's that? Fill it full of wood. And when the—when that's over, you put—when the Depression is over, why you go back and put your grates back in it and put it back on gas. The gas company cut it off the town. That's one reason why nobody can pay gas bill. OK, the gas company says, "I'm not going to give you gas," you know, "nobody's going to owe me." So they cut the gas off the whole town. They cut the electricity off the whole town. You know, the whole town is down. So we went down to—anybody who wants to go singing tonight, they'd go down to the school house and they could sing songs. See. And there was also—they talked about the union and anything else like that. See what I mean?

DC: So did the mines get organized?

JM: Huh?

DC: Did the mines get organized where you lived?

JM: Coal mines was under UAW, under United Mine Workers. But there wasn't—my Dad tried to organize—my Dad was—helped to organize them. I even helped to organize the University of Michigan. I had them all signed up and they're doing just fine. But when I come out, we had a better union coming in than this one we have. So everybody vote. Do you want that other union, FIAA, or something—I done forgot now, anyways—it's still going on. It's still a union at the University of Michigan. And, I done forgot now what it was. It was four letters.

MM: But down at the coal mines.

JM: Huh?

MM: Down at the coal mines.

JM: Yeah, well this was—my Dad was—he was unionizing all these people at the coal mines. But only one I ever helped out here, was out here, and that's when I got a little older.

DC: Sure. We'll get up to there eventually, maybe tomorrow at the rate—but that's OK!

JM: But anyway, the . . .

DC: But you had some exposure to unions is what I'm getting at, you know, when you were younger. Your father, it sounds like he was involved.

JM: There was no—they just talked about it, but they—what happens is, the union was made in 1880. Now the reason why my Dad didn't like that, they had the yellow dog slip. Now the yellow dog slip is over on Gauley River, over in Gauley River I think somewhere. Well the yellow dog slip was at Widen [scene of many labor battles, ENE of Charleston]. And anyone that worked there could never get a job anywhere else. They wouldn't have them. The people didn't want them. Wouldn't have them in camp—they'd run them off. Get you to pack up and move.

DC: And why didn't you want them?

JM: Because they're scabs.

DC: Gotcha, OK.

JM: See what I'm talking about? You're against us. Well, even if you *were*, in '32 and '33 you were making a dollar an hour. Well, you didn't make a whole lot more after that, but still, if you can get unionized you would—you can get a little bit better. Better money. And people don't understand it, you know what I mean? People didn't understand it—said we want—well how come, if you've been unionized for a year and you haven't got big—no

money—can't—no money. You know what I mean? Well if you're unionized, you got the big battle over, but that don't mean they're going to give you money. You got to be on the bargaining table before you can get any money. See what I mean? In other words, somebody got to bargain for you.

DC: Absolutely, yeah. So, when did you leave West Virginia? Besides the trip to Cincinnati, or Coney Island.

JM: Well, when I went to—when I went in service.

DC: OK. And when was that?

JM: I went in the service in '42. September the 7th—*December* the 7th, of '42. That's one year after Pearl Harbor. I remember carrying the paper—I delivered the paper when it said Pearl Harbor was invaded. In other words—I had that big paper, and I delivered that paper—the papers that day.

DC: So what branch of the service did you go into?

JM: I went in the Navy. But they throwed me out.

MM: [Laughs]

DC: Why?

JM: I was color blind, so they put me in the Seabees. I was color blind, that's what the CBs get [play on words]—their name was color blind. Did you know it?

DC: No, I didn't know that. [missed the joke]

JM: Yeah, well, you're still in the Navy. You're going to do the same thing as the Navy, except you're in a different group. And I liked it because you were better off. You were more liberal in that Navy. We had men that had owned three stores, and he—the government needs—the government needs every man they can get. Well, this store owner, he said, "I'll go in service, but you're going to pay me more than $78.00 a month," or $76—$74 or 6 at that time. Finally got up to $78.00, when I was overseas. All through World War II it was $78.00. Well, it was—I don't know what it was—but he don't want $76.00 when he owns three stores. They need him to be a leader for a bunch of seventeen-year-old boys. You know what I mean? OK, what are you going to do—OK, you give him a chief's job. A chief rating. You know what I mean? Now if you're in the Navy, the regular Navy, you're going to be in there four, three or four years, three years, before you get to be chief, you know what I mean?

DC: They jumped him right up there.

JM: You got to get first, and second, and third, from third, second, to first—and then you get to

be petty officer, chief petty officer. All right? Well, that takes you about, at least six months, or something. On some of them, if he's bright enough, he's still not going to make the grade. He's got to go through these books and all that stuff. Well anyway, they give him a petty officer's rating. Now he gets three hundred and some dollars a month, which is big money back in them days, and we get our $78.00 and all the time I had the $78.00 I couldn't spend it, never spent a penny of it.

DC: Did you send any back home, or did it just pile up somewhere?

JM: It piles up. I was over three and a half years, overseas. What am I going to spend any money for?

DC: Where all did you serve? Where were you positioned?

JM: I was—I started out at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Admiralty Islands, and that's in the Admiralty Islands, and then all the way up to Marshalls, Gilberts, Peleliu, up to Okinawa—you know, you're next door to Japan.

DC: Were you in combat?

JM: Well I got three—three battles. I was in three battles, put it that way. And I went in on the second echelon of—here they are, bang bang all the way around us. And something—oh boy—something—and you'd get on your--get on a little—a little old boat. The little boats—landing docks—landing docks something. LCD—landing craft dock—anyway, I don't know what it was, the kind that—the kind that the president was . . . [does he mean PT Boat?]

End of Tape I, Side A

BeginTape I, Side B

JM: . . . these little old carriers, things, you'd go in on them. We went in on, uh, 575s—was a big five hundred—five-hundred-foot—the whole front of the boat falls LST. Some of it went in LSTs. LST—let's drops—a whole front end opens up and it'll drop a ramp right out on the dock. Right out there—no docks. Right out on the sand. And you hope that you get on far enough that there's not water on it. It don't matter if the water is knee-deep—if it's waist-deep, you're still going in anyway; you'll make it. I happened to—on the practice one—you know, we landed in California, a few landings. I walked out there and walked off the edge of it. Jumped down—twenty feet down there! Twenty feet to the bottom. I just jumped off of this—it's three foot out there— but I stepped off out here. And that big—went up like that. And I got a pack on my back and I got a rifle.

DC: You could be heading right down to the bottom.

JM: And I'm down twenty feet; I'm down twenty feet, so I says, "Well, I've got to make up my

mind as to whether, throw my pack off, throw my rifle down, and swim to the top, or what am I going to do?" I says, "I can climb that bank." And I started digging right up that bank and come up. And I carried my rifle and my pack and I walked out. And they'd already had a man, a scuba diving man to go . . .

MM: Looking for you. [laughs]

JM: Yeah. They had a scuba-diving man putting on his suit, ready to go after me. He already had it on, probably. But they had three of them lined up, and says, "Another five seconds or so and you would have had three men down there," looking for me. Well, that was in a practice. You know, you're just—they don't want to lose men—they want you in the service—before they get them over there. Well anyway, that was fun. I got out there and I shook my rifle and I shook all the water out of it to make sure there wasn't no water in it. No water in it. Picked it up like that and shoot it. It's good! And they all laughed about it because they was all—keeping on looking for me. Anyway, here I am, I'm heading on up, just right up the line! They never seen me again. They finally drug me down and told me about that, says, "You went off the side. Were yous the one that went off the side." "Well, yeah." "Well everybody knows about you going off the side. And he walked up that cliff, walked up that bank. Straight up, you know. Forty five degrees. I'm digging in it, just digging right on up it.

DC: Didn't have much margin for error, but you made it.

JM: Well, no, but what it was, I had—my lungs was bigger than everybody else's at that time. I could stay down underwater four minutes. And they said, well most people can't do that. So I guess it was because I was sawing wood. You know, when you saw wood, your lungs gets bigger.

DC: Yeah, I imagine you worked out a lot up there.

JM: Well that was every other day, sawing wood. And also, there wasn't no boys going to pick on me. I found out them boys wasn't going to pick on me, so I went after the troublemakers, and I got the troublemakers and cleaned them out.

DC: What did you do when you got out of the service? When did you get out of the service? Did you stay on after the war?

JM: Well I got out in '46. And, '46—and I went to—first I went to Pittsburgh to refrigeration and air conditioning school. Pittsburgh Institution of Air Conditioning and Refrigeration. OK. Then after that, I took over—took another class, eight months I guess it was, of appliance repair. In other words, that gives me electrical experience, and I needed electrical experience along with my refrigeration. Because refrigeration didn't teach any, very much electrical. You know, every bit you learn—education you get along the line—well you take it. Then I went down to Florida to work on heat pumps. And also to find out what a whole year was, four seasons. One month after the four seasons was over, I was on the way back.

DC: Not so keen on Florida, huh?

JM: Yeah, because Florida is not anything except an old folks' home.

DC: Even in the 1940s.

JM: Well, '46. But if nothing there, Petersburg is full of retired—anybody's big shots that you want. You can get a retired doctor, if you want to—he'll work on you for nothing. Just, you know what I mean, you're just friends. And all the engineers that you want—all of anyone you want is in Petersburg. I mean they're there for retirement. And they got more experience than all the rest of them. You know what I'm talking about? And I even worked for awhile there in Sears and Roebuck. You wear a uniform to work, you drive a truck for Sears and Roebuck to get started. And then finally I got me a job in refrigeration and then a man came and see—he come to see me, and he says, "I need you real bad. I'll offer you five dollars and a half an hour." So I thought he wanted—he wants an engineer. Well I've done the engineering work on that for him. I've done it because all the time I was going to refrigeration school, I'm also going—working for Alex Hutchinson. Alex Hutchinson was the president of the engineering association, and I was working for him.

DC: OK, so you learned a lot.

JM: I surveyed—helped survey the Pennsylvania turnpike. And I also engineered—helped lay out roads on all these old housing projects.

DC: This is while you were in Pittsburgh, then you went out—yeah, did this on the side.

JM: Yeah, but I was up there a year and a half, and all that time I'm working for Alex Hutchinson. I happened to be lucky to hit the president. And he was from Wilkinsburg, little office right there in Wilkinsburg, next to Pittsburgh. So anyway, we had—the man says that you run the transit [surveying tool] and you do a good job on laying out curves and he says, and everything, and he says, "You're the person I need!" He offered me five dollars and a half! Down there in Florida, the wages is seventy-five cents. He offered me five dollars and a half. He thought he'd offer me big wages and I'd take it. Well he's putting me out of class. And I don't want to go up there and act like a dummy, because I don't even know what he's doing. Do you know what I mean?

DC: You didn't feel capable of doing it, it sounds.

JM: If he would've offered me two dollars an hour—would've been big wages compared to seventy-five. If he'd of offered me two dollars an hour, I would've worked for him and then he could've put me into the job that he wants, if I'm capable of doing the job. Because, you know, this year and a half of engineering is a whole lot of—you learn a lot, and you've got to learn it in order to help run the transit. So anyway, I thought he outclassed me.

DC: So you turned him down?

JM: I turned him down. I didn't tell him it was the reason I turned him down—if he'd offered me two dollars I'd have been glad to have it. Isn't that right?

DC: Wow, that's interesting. To turn down that money.

JM: Yeah, but that was five dollars and a half, it was way up there in Florida. In other words, he needs a boss. He needs a man to run the whole outfit. I wasn't the man to run the whole outfit. I'll run this transit, I'll lay it out, and I'll fix you the curves, I'll lay your curves out, I'll even put your stakes inside—inside radius or outside radius. In other words, there's stakes out there that sometimes around a hill you have to put the stakes up there to get to the radius. And sometimes you have to put it around the inside. If it's a big water hole, you're not putting those stakes there. You're putting the stakes around the outside.

DC: Well you were still a very young man at this point, too.

JM: Huh?

DC: You were a very young man at this point. You were just 22 years old, or so.

JM: I know, but well, yes, but . . .

DC: He's offering you a lot of responsibility. He was offering . . .

JM: I know, but see, when I was in high school, I was a bigger, better—I had in the tenth grade, I was using the twelfth grade books. In the tenth grade, my math was equal to twelfth grade.

DC: We knew that by the time you were age three.

JM: Huh?

DC: We knew that when you were age three!

JM: I know, but my math was—my math was way ahead of some of the others, but my English and algebra—well not algebra, but my English and literature was way down below everybody. I can flunk literature, and history, because I can't see it well enough. My eyes—they said my eyes was too slow.

DC: OK. Well you have an aptitude for math and technical things.

JM: My fingers was fast, and they took these aptitude tests down there. They didn't take the regular test, whatever it was. They took an aptitude test all the time. Well an aptitude tests in five ways—said my fingers is fast and my eyes is slow, on my arms. Well if your fingers

is fast, your arms should be fast, shouldn't it? You know what I mean?

DC: I don't know . . .

JM: But anyway, they said it would be five different ways. Says here, you got a high mark here and a high mark there, and way up here and down here—way up here and down here. And I'm no good on their history questions and things on that order. And yet I was doing real good in math. He says, "You're coming up as good as college, some college people." And that was only me.

DC: So you turned down this job in Florida, then what did you do? You said you got out of Florida.

JM: Well, I left. I came up here to work in here. I worked for Dodge. But before that . . .

DC: Explain to me how you got your sights on this part of the world, then. You were down in Florida.

JM: I'm in Florida. And where is the next biggest job offer? In other words, if you move out there—if you go to California you're going to work in the field. If you're going to Arizona, you're going to work in the other things. In other words, I looked it—you just looked it over. Now, you find out that Detroit is the only place that's capable of hiring people. And what happens is, I came up here during a steel strike. I came up here and I says, "Oh well, I'll get a job. Don't worry about it, I'll get a job. Only just two people—only have to make enough money for two people to live on. Isn't that right?

M: He got married.

DC: You're married—when did you get married?

MM: '47

JM: I got married—'47. 1947. We both got married in '47. She got married here, and I got married there.

DC: [laughs] But you found each other later

JM: What?

DC: You found each other at some point.

JM: Well, that's only just a few years ago.

DC: OK. But anyways, in 1947 you were married. So you had a wife to think about as well. And you came to Detroit.

JM: Well, I didn't have any kids until, just later. Well anyway, what happens is, I worked for all of these automotive companies. I worked for two of them at a time. I worked for—when I was in school—refrigeration school—I was also working on the engineering corps. And ever since—ever since then, I had two jobs all the time. I worked up here in—I had seniority at General Motors and I had seniority at Ford, at the same time, for four years. I was working the day shift at one and the night shift at another. The day shift or evening shift, or whatever it is. There's two shifts. I worked two shifts, and not come out ahead. That's the only way you're going to come out ahead, you know what I mean?

DC: Well let's see if we can back up and sort all this out. What was your first job? You said your first job was with Dodge, is that what you said?

JM: Uhh, my first job was probably inspection. I worked—I worked as inspection on—I was inspector on—that was the last job . . .

DC: You said you came up north during a steel strike. There was a steel strike going on.

JM: Yeah, and I got hired for—the day that—the day that—anyway, General Motors lost a great big factory, burnt down. And I was hired that day. [the GM Hydra-Matic Transmission Plant fire, in Livonia, August 12, 1953]

MM: So he lost that job.

JM: Then I lost that job. Monday, there was no factory there.

DC: Wow. Do you remember when that was?

JM: I'm trying to think of the name of the big company, the big steel mill factory.

DC: So you just got the job and it burned down.

JM: Yeah. Friday, I got a job Friday. And Saturday it burned down. [actually on Wednesday]

DC: So you didn't have seniority there.

MM: So he lost there [laughing].

JM: So I didn't get seniority.

DC: So what happened next?

JM: I can't—you know, that's a famous name, but I can't come up with the name.

DC: I'll figure it out.

JM: Well the reason I can't come up with the name is I had this radiation stuff, and it's cutting

me out of all kinds of stuff. You know this radiation I had the last month or so?

MM: He's been fighting cancer, so . . .

DC: Yeah, that's what you said, yeah. I wish you the best with that.

JM: Well that stopped me from—I can't remember—I can't even talk to people because I can't remember—Ternstedt! Ternstedt. Ternstedt burned down. [Ternstedt Division occupied a small portion of the GM Hydra-Matic plant.]

DC: It did. OK, that's a famous plant. Well I think your memory's working very well today, by the way. You're remembering a lot of things that I'm finding very interesting.

JM: Well anyway, Ternstedt burned down. And I worked for Ford. I worked for Ford in Highland Park.

DC: OK. Do you remember what your job was at Ford in Highland Park?

JM: My job was—we were making bombs. We were making—things you drop. Drop bombs—hundred pound bombs you drop. And you take a hundred pound bomb, and it's a big steel casing, half-inch thick, and you want to balance that thing. How would you balance that?

DC: Very carefully.

JM: You can't put it on a wheel and turn it. You know what I mean? So here's what they do. Because the center might be off. So what they do is they lay it in a big pan, this big, of mercury. It will always—light side will float up. Steel, iron, or whatever it is, will float in mercury. Have you heard that?

DC: Well it makes sense—mercury's heavy.

JM: Mercury is heavy, OK. It'll float in mercury. And now that's the side you drill the hole, in the bottom one, and finally if it—so it will roll—it's no problem. You send it out. And I was right there, anyway.

DC: So you were working with this mercury flotation, whatever, it sounds like.

JM: Yeah.

DC: OK.

JM: And I'm not sure what I did there. I don't know what my job was. For all I know is, that this big pan of mercury and turning these big old things.

DC: Now was this during the Korean War at all, or was this during peacetime when you were

working on these bombs?

JM: No, this was . . .

M: 1948, ‘49, somewhere.

JM: It’d be ‘40—anyway, peacetime, I guess.

DC: OK. So Ford had not reconverted all their plants back to civilian use.

JM: Probably, yeah.

DC: Yeah, they were still producing . . .

JM: If I could remember the date that I was there. Anyway, this is—then, I even put in headliners for the [short pause] Fisher Body.

DC: OK, you worked for Fisher Body.

JM: Ford, I mean Chevrolet—General Motors doesn’t make all their bodies. Fisher Body makes bodies—a different company—for Chevrolets, for the big Cadillacs. So only the Cadillacs and the biggest car would have Fisher Body. You know? In other words, they’re the better body.

DC: What did you do when you worked at Fisher Body? You said you put in headliners?

JM: I put in headliners.

DC: OK. Do you remember anything about that job, what it was like?

JM: Well, it takes—you stretch it up and tack—and tack it and put it on the little hooks and you have a tack hammer. You have a tack hammer, you have a pair of scissors—a special big pair of scissors to cut them off, cut it for that. And you stretch it, and you have to stretch that liner just perfect, otherwise start all over again. So if you have, you know—if you can’t make it—if you line this line to that line and you got it all fixed up and then you start stretching it. And you put in headliners for the Cadillacs—in the Cadillacs. That’s one thing.

DC: OK. So let’s see. Do you remember anything about the people you worked with there? Did you work as a team with anybody else or did you work on your own? How did that work?

JM: Well, it’s coming down the line.

DC: The line, OK.

JM: And I'd get every—the line ran rather slow. It run slow. I'd catch every—if there's five people of us, why I'd catch every fifth one. See what I'm talking about? The line would run that slow. You may take this line from here to the, almost to the parking lot.

DC: How did you get along with the people you worked with?

JM: Real good. All but one. All but one.

DC: OK. What was the problem there?

JM: They said he was a mental case. They said he was, you know, kind of a mental case. And I was an Indian.

MM: [laughs]

DC: So did he object to you being Indian? Is that what you're saying?

JM: In other words, I used my Indian stuff.

MM: [laughs]

DC: [going along with it] Tell me what you mean.

JM: I don't know. But it's worked three times for me. In other words, you're my friend and you can be my friend. I'll tell you you're my friend, but I do any little something—how's your ulcers doing today? Well you ask a man how's your ulcer doing, you're not your friend. And the next thing you know, he's got a bellyache. You know what I mean?

DC: You tormented him, it sounds like.

JM: Well it works. You'll be the best friend you ever had. He'll be your best friend you ever had, and finally that old boy killed himself.

MM: He was a mental problem.

DC: Did he cause you difficulties on the job then?

JM: He caused everybody trouble. He caused everybody trouble, but I've used my Indian thing three times.

DC: That's one.

JM: No kidding. Well [?], that's a gentleman at Ford, when I worked here at Ford, when I retired. We had a man and I says—he was always after me, he was a boss. And he was always after me. I says, just wait, I got three weeks. That man will be running from me. And he did. The last thing I told him, says, "Now, if you're going to climb them walls," I

says, "You're climbing walls, I see you've been running around here climbing walls, and trying to make—making the women cry. You don't make the women cry." He says, "You believe that?" You know, ride them so bad that the women cry. Well you don't make the women—I says, "You don't make me cry." Says, "I have been neglecting to try to come in to see you when you call to come in here and fix your machine. But now that you're getting—priding on me," I says, "you don't make me cry anymore." Anyway, that was just an expression, but I says, "Now, I says, "if you're going to climb the walls, don't climb between this beam and that beam. There's a sidewalk down there, and it goes to the medical department." And I says, "They don't want shit on the sidewalk." In other words, I just tell him. I just tell him that if you're going to climb the walls, and finally I tell him enough of things. I don't tell him the same thing ever—don't ever say the same thing over. Don't ever.

DC: Now is that because he was riding these people so hard, is that why . . .

JM: He was riding these—he can ride the women. And he rode me. But he don't ride forever. All of a sudden I says—got tired of it. And I got tired of it three times, and it worked every time.

DC: You've told me two.

JM: I ain't going to tell you all of them. [laughs] Anyway, it works. I even—my one boss—was one—one boss says you can't take off. "You been taking off. Every time you take off, it's a Saturday or a Sunday." You know. So I says, "Well, OK you don't want me to take off Saturday or Sunday." I says, "We're entitled—our union is entitled to a Saturday or a Sunday off if we really want to have the whole time off Saturday and Sunday." They says, "Well you have to put in for a Saturday and Sunday off." So I says, "I don't take off Saturday and Sunday, then I'll quit it." So I quit taking Saturday and Sunday. I took off Monday and Thursday. I took off three weeks in a row.

DC: Do you remember when this was?

JM Huh?

DC: Do you remember when this was? Or which job this was for?

JM: This was at Ford's. This was back in the '70s. Way up in the '70s. And I took off Mondays and Thursdays. And then, I had three of them. That's enough—don't want to overdo it. I took off Tuesdays and Wednesdays—Tuesdays and—not the—the other one—but Tuesdays and Fridays I guess it was. I started taking off Tuesdays and Fridays. Three days in a row—and what it was—three weeks in a row—so then, sure enough, I sent my lady to England, and she came back on the wrong day one time. I had to go and get her on a Thursday, you know, one of the Thursdays that I'm supposed to take a day off. They come back on a Wednesday. That's the wrong day! So I came back and I had to drop the man—let him go. You know what I mean, it breaks the cycle. It's kind of—it kind of lets him know that I'm going to pick three days off but then he can't chew me out because I'm

not taking Saturday or Sunday. You know what I mean? In other words, I'm mean. Just a little bit of meanness in me. I like that.

MM: Go back to Dodge. That's where you put the first air conditioner in.

JM: Oh, well, I worked at all of them. I worked for all of them.

DC: When did you work at Dodge?

JM: I was—well, I quit in '67—'60—'57. That was the last time I'd worked on anything—I left—I left Detroit in '57. Come out here to work at Ford out here.

DC: So you came out to Ford in '57.

JM: Yeah, in '57, but I didn't start to get the job there until '64.

DC: Really? What did you do in the meantime?

JM: I worked at the University of Michigan.

DC: That's when you were at Michigan, OK.

JM: I worked for the University of Michigan. I was maintenance man for the Lawyers Club. Maintenance man. I did all the jobs.

DC: I want to back up a little bit, though. If you would go with me, at least, back to Fisher Body when you were putting in the headliners and all.

JM: Yeah. I worked there. But now then I became—then I got laid off of there probably, and I went to Dodge. Sometime or other, I'm working, when they laid off . . .

DC: Do you remember when you got laid off?

JM: No, here's what happens is, I got laid off of Fisher Body, because I didn't have connections with another company. Anyway I went to Dodge Main. All right, now, I can't say the dates of that because—I did have them wrote down but I had to write them down in order to remember. OK. I went to Dodge—that's when I had two jobs again. All right? I worked for Dodge Main. I became electrical inspector. I was electrical inspector because I had a little bit of electrical background. You know, I'd had that little bit of school I had, and they thought I was smart enough with electrical background. And anyway, I was electrical inspector. Now I even caught cars with the wrong motors in them. And at 8:00, the motor is going to be shipped out. This motor is going to be shipped out to Saudi Arabia. Got to be on a boat at 8:00. And I caught this wrong motor—put a Plymouth motor in it. So I told them about it, and they had the time to take it out, and at 8:00 it caught on the bus—on the boat. Within minutes, they said, within a few minutes—it was within minutes of getting that thing on the boat. Well anyway they got it. And that's how

come—when I—see I worked on heat pumps. And we—going to put air conditioners in Dodge automobiles. So it was probably in '53. All right, they're going to put them—down in '53, they're going to put air conditioners in Dodge automobile. So they said I'm the only one they've got that knows anything about air conditioners or refrigeration. See?

DC: I see it coming together.

JM: So they said, "You are it. So put an air conditioner in this Dodge automobile." I had to bend the pipes. The motor comes with an air conditioner already—the engineer had already had a mounting on it, and mounted it, and put a fan belt on it. In other words, it's hooked up. So now, I have to bend the pipes and put it in, and put it in the—put the receiver in the trunk of the car, and evaporator goes in front of the radiator, and put in the controls on it, and bend the pipes. And I bent the pipes and the man says, "Make them as straight as you can," because we're—make them—"Bend the curve right, go straight out here, bend the curve right down, and make it go to the end and make it fit." And I made it fit. He says "I want them pipes off of them cars." He went out and took a bunch of pipes off the cars and shipped them out. And the next thing I know, I got a great big box, about this big around, big square, and it's full of pipes all bent to order. And they give me eleven—I had eleven men finally building up and putting air conditioners on these things, and I put three hundred and fifty six, before I got laid off. I got laid off.

DC: Oh really. Would that be in '54 or so you got laid off?

JM: Well, in '54. '53 and '54. And I had eleven men working for me.

DC: So it was your job to figure out how to install these . . .

JM: My job is to set the controls, pump them down, put a little gas in them, and pump that gas out, take out everything you can get out.

DC: So you were—OK, so you were—you were actually working on the refrigeration compound.

JM: I'm the refrigeration man.

DC: Gotcha. Yeah.

JM: All right. I'm the refrigeration man. I took it out and set the controls in the back to try to get as much air, cold air as I can get it. And what happens is, that's when I got laid off. And a man brings in three older men, he's got—I'm working with three men—and those three men has top seniority. Now they had top seniority. They are going to be the—he wants them to have my job when I get laid off.

DC: They're going to be the new refrigeration guys.

JM: Yeah, they're going to be refrigeration men. I says, "This is a four year course to be a

refrigerator man. And this four year course, and you can't do it in a short time. And I've had heat pumps and everything else along with," you know, "just in order to know all I can about refrigeration." So what I did is, this man, he says, "You got three weeks to make a refrigeration man out of him." I says, "All I can do is to just show him what to put in, and whatever, but you're going to have to have your engineer man down here to break him in because you can't do it." [Brief interruption] But you know how it would be to break a man—if you had like a college education, you could try to break a man with a college education. It was just—mine was just the one course, though.

DC: Sure, but it sounds like they were asking you to train someone to *replace* you.

JM: Well, the only thing about it is, you send a new man out there to work on a refrigerator. The first thing he's going to do is twist a valve here and let all the gas out. OK, his job's over. Well anyway, I had to break the engineer in. The engineer, see, he says, "I'm making $750 a month." He was paid by the month. And back then, wages were way down there—three dollars an hour, maybe. Might have been three dollars. Could've been in '54. I don't remember what they were back then. But anyway, they treated me like a big shot, some of them. And some of them didn't like it because they was jealous of me, I guess. And a couple of them wants to whip me. I says, "I got to carry this big box through there."

DC: Now who was it who wanted to whip you?

JM: Boys off the line. And—because I wear a suit. My job is clean, brand new pipes, new wrenches, and what would I get dirty? And that gas, you can drink it. It wouldn't hurt you. Anyway, that was the case. And I wore a blue suit all the time. And I am the boss of eleven people.

DC: Were you a union member at that time?

JM: Yeah. But I wasn't really official of a boss—I'm just an engineer. I am not an engineer. The engineer is in the office.

DC: You're the one with the practical know-how.

JM: I am the one that—the engineer is the one that would be there. The boss is another office. I'm still registered as an electrical inspector. You know what I mean?

DC: Sure. That's your official title.

JM: That was my title. So I'm not really a boss or nothing there. And the men says, "You go through here just like a big shot." I says, "That's my job, is to run this machine." I got a picture of it at the house.

DC: Do you?

JM: I got a picture of it at the house.

DC: I'd love to see that picture some time.

JM: It's on the—well, it's just a car with the hood up and a tank on the wall to tell me how much gas I'm putting in, just by the gauges, how much gas has gone into this motor. It has a lines—it has a leak detector. My leak detector's a big box about as big as that with a handle on it. And you know what—carbon detector is all it was. OK, it'll detect a leak down to—good for a hundred years. It'll leak a pound in a hundred years, so that's pretty well down. In other words, I get them down as low as I can, and that's all I can, and the man does—teach him how to do a good flare. I mean, they have to cut them off at a certain edge, and just off the edge has got to be there because at the edge you're going to cut in certain . . .

DC: Like the seal?

JM: Yeah. In other words, I have to break the men in to do their own flaring and they put it on. And you clean the flares, and you don't just put it on an old dirty flare. So you put it on there and two metals go together and you squeeze them just so much, don't overdo them. You know what I mean? Don't twist the nut and twist—ruin the threads. Anyway, you do stretch the thread just a hair to get this down. And the gas is three times thinner than air. It's just like this air going out of this balloon. You know? You fill it full of refrigeration, it's going to go down quicker. It just goes right down. And this also weighs a pound, and when that big around, it weighs a pound. The people shake, look at it and wave, look at it and laugh, and a lot of them will really get some of them, because it's nothing, but yet it weighs a pound! You know what I mean? And I filled up big balloons like this and tell them to feel it. And they say, "Yeah, it's heavy." And they look at it, "You got water in that thing?" No, no water in it. You know what I mean?

DC: Now, if I remember correctly, you were doing all this work, and then you got laid off.

JM: Well, I only had two years' seniority. This was fifteen-year men that I'm talking to.

DC: Right, right. You're in this crash course trying to teach them how to do your job and then you get laid off.

JM: Yep. And the engineer come out of the shop and he says, "I get $750 a month and would you break me in along with them men? Because I don't know anything about that motor—which way the gas is going, which way it's going or what's it doing." You know what I mean? It's going over here and the gas is evaporating over there and how do you control evaporation? By the vacuum on it. How much vacuum. Well how you control the vacuum? And you know what I mean? In other words—and he has a three-way valve here, and you twist it, the three-way valve. And he asks, "How do you twist this valve?" He didn't even know which way to twist a screw in. You know what I mean? I says, "In is the way you twist the screw in the wall." He didn't know that. You know what I mean? He had never worked.

DC: Where did he get his degree? He had an engineering degree from someplace.

JM: Yes, but he had an engineering degree from U. of M. But they didn't have no things. In other words, he doesn't have no experience. OK, so I told him which way. And then, "How do you know whether that valve cuts this wire, this line off, or this one?" In other words, you going to run the gas this way or you going to run it this way? You know what I mean? There's ways of doing it. Well anyway, he twists the valve in and I says, "Now you look at this valve and you put it in, and when you twist that valve in, that seat goes up there and closes that one off. When you open that one up, it backs out here and hits this one. And this valve then closes off. This one will close off and that will open up. Or you close this one and open whichever one you want and close the other one." You know what I mean? And I had to show him and try to get him—take a valve here and twist it and look at it, blow through it, and see which way . . .

DC: Yeah, you can tell which way the air is coming out.

JM: Blow through it. In other words, he's a kid. He don't know which way the gas is going. And you can't *see* the gas. All right, well my job was to teach him, show him, some of the things. What's going to happen to that thing? That thing's sitting in there boiling. Just feel—I feel a line here and I tell you whether that gas is coming or going right or not. I feel this line down here if it's getting hot. And if it's not getting hot enough, something's wrong. You know what I mean? It gets a certain temperature. You can't get—change that gas. You can put it in a bottle, and at zero pressure, it's going to be a certain temperature. In other words, it's all going to boil out at a certain temperature. And if you had a certain pressure on that, it's going to be a certain temperature. The pressure and the temperature is the same. On Freon. Freon is pretty close to the same. A hundred degrees—if that thing feels like a hundred degrees, I got a hundred pound pressure on it. See what I mean? Anyway, that's the way they—and I broke him in all I can. And he appreciated it. He was a—he says, "I didn't know nothing about that! Because all we got is what's on the books." You know what I mean? And he was good at it on the book. He was good at it on the book. I liked him. He was a good old boy.

M: So then you went from that job to another one.

JM: Huh?

MM: So then you went from that job to another one.

JM: Well, I don't remember what jobs I go. But I went to the University of Michigan.

DC: OK, that was after you got laid off. Let's see—there's something else, though, in between.

JM: I can't put you the dates down anyhow. When I put my application in, I had to fill out like two cards. I filled out two cards, because one is I'm working with Dodge Main from this to that. I'm working for General Motors from this to that.

DC: You had a lot of overlap.

JM: And the same time I got the job here—and from here to that—I'm working at—somewhere else.

DC: Do you still have any of those old cards in your attic or basement?

JM: I didn't—no, there was only one card. I just made them out to pass them in to the companies. You know what I mean?

DC: How about in some of those early jobs, we can take either Dodge or the Fisher Body job, or even back at Highland Park, do you recall any interaction with the union? Were those all union jobs?

JM: No, but the union was coming in next door to Square D.

DC: I don't know what Square D is? [company that made electrical distribution and industrial control products]

JM: Square D was next door to the Highland—in Highland Park. And they were coming in, and they were hiring people, hiring scabs, to do the union jobs. So what happens is—I didn't know even what it was. It says, "Now Hiring," and I went over and seen it. And sure enough, I walked in the job, and they had guards to get you in. And also they have had guards to get you out. I walked right out.

DC: So you went across the street from the Highland Park job just to check this one out. Is that what you did?

JM: Yeah, I went over to get a job, because, you know, I'm out of a job right now. OK. Well I can still stay out of job before I go over there and work scabbing them people. That was Square D. I wasn't the only one walking out—when they go in there and find out that they're hired to take good man's jobs, they—the union men walk out. So I walked out.

DC: Were you unionized at the Highland Park plant, the bomb-making plant?

JM: Highland Park?

DC: When you were making those bombs and balancing them in mercury.

JM: I don't know because I was only there just three months. I don't know whether it had a union or not. And I don't know—the union of the Dodge Main—why, we got union wages, I think. But I don't remember what—I don't know what it was. It was low, but that's still union wages. You know what I mean?

DC: Sure. Do you ever remember, you know, having any grievances for instance, or ever

having any use for the union when you were at Dodge Main?

JM: No, no. If you, if you're a normal person, you'll never have any problems. You know what I mean? Normal people don't—usually don't have problems. It's the ones that have trouble with the boss and they do everything, you know what I'm talking about? They're not normal.

DC: It sounds like if you were an inspector, I mean—who was your boss when you were an inspector?

JM: When I was a boss, I had a big shot as an inspector, which was—he had his own office, inspection department. Inspection department is different from the other departments. You know what I mean? They can have—their inspection department can be upstairs. I had to walk all the way around the corner to the other . . .

DC: How did your boss monitor what you were doing, when you were on inspection?

JM: Oh he comes out some—my boss comes out. I had a little boss, Palmer Roblin [?] was his name. Two last names. And he was my boss. He tells my boss—he tells the inspection department what I'm doing. But he didn't bother me because he says, "I don't know, either."

DC: So he was inspecting you, but he didn't know what you were supposed to be doing.

JM: Yeah. I got him better. I got him around. I get him ten, eleven, twelve cars a day. I did ten cars a day, you know when it was running the most, had help, I got ten cars a day if I could.

DC: Now what do you mean, you got him ten cars a day? I'm not sure what that means.

JM: Air conditioners. Put air conditioner in it, fix them up and get them out and send them out, and I had a better name of Cadillac—Oldsmobile I think it was—Packard, Cadillac, Packard—and I can't think of the name of the company of this one. Little old—there were four companies, and now I can't tell you the names of them. And Studebaker was one of them. And the other one was one of Dodge's—DeSoto.

DC: OK, sure.

JM: I couldn't think of the name DeSoto. I had a better name than any one of those. I had no recalls back, compared to what they were having.

DC: That's impressive.

JM: You know what I mean? And they liked me. Because, see I got—I think it was 94 percent efficient. Well, they was way down to 70 and some to 60, and they got all kind of problems. Well, if I can hold my 94, I'm—you know what I mean? In other words, I want

these things running. I send them to Saudi Arabia, I don't want to see them again! Isn't that right? And I got a good name out of it.

DC: Yeah, yeah. But nonetheless, you spent a long time then out of the industry. You know, you had a good name and had a great track record and all this, but well then, you got laid off and went to work at U of M.

JM: No, I worked at U of M—I was a maintenance man of U of M, and I did more jobs on the maintenance man than any other man they'd had up to that point.

DC: Were you doing the same kind of, you know, refrigeration/ air conditioner maintenance, or just any kind of maintenance?

JM: No, my job was to—they had desks—they had desks that they had used since 19 and 24. And they have the same furniture that they used in 1924. It's old . . .

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

JM: But you see, when you're working, we have seventeen entrances in the Lawyers Club. There is, I don't know how many—maybe ten, twelve, twenty, fifteen, or whatever it is—there's 400 rooms of it, I think, there.

DC: In the law quad there.

JM: Yeah. All right. They have the same furniture that they had until 1924, and they have the same tables, even today, in the dining room. The dining room is fifty-five feet high. And the thing—you know, it's fifty-five feet high, people think that's the chapel.

DC: I've been in that quad before.

JM: You've been the quad. All right, well let me tell you, the tables—I had to redo the tables every year, and it has an eighth of an inch veneer on it. An eighth of an inch. Well how are you going to redo all of that if you don't—what happens is, somebody was a good furniture man years ago. And he took it off and he put Bruce's hard wax on it. Now, if you put varnish on it, it'll only last three months and you take it, the wet weather—a wet cloth on it—you can take your fingernails and scratch that varnish off. You know what I mean? So what they did, is you take Bruce's use on it, and you put stain on it. Now the stain is not just regular—don't go to the store and buy the stain. You use turpentine, and you put burnt umber in it, you put raw umber in it, and you put Indian red in it. If it's a mahogany, you'll have it be a little mahogany on it—the color. You put Indian red in it. And if you stain it, you get it the right color, and then let it dry overnight and you put Bruce's juice—this hard—Bruce's hard coat on it. Anyway, I done forgot Bruce's isn't the only name on it,

but I can't remember now what it was. Anyway, it's a hard coat. And you put the same coat that goes on the bottom of a marine boat. Now that's hard stuff. The same thing that goes on the bottom of a boat. It's a plastic. Now anyway, here's what happens is: you go in there and you take off every—they'll leave their cigarette on there and you'll have a burn. Oh you take the stuff off of the top of it, and you take that burn marks out. And you don't dig a great big hole in it, otherwise you'll have no veneer on that thing. See what I mean? And you put the layers back, and you put it back, stain it back, and you get it back perfect, and nobody ever knows that it was ever a stain there. Now, we had one woman that came in there, and she says, "You can't burn this stuff, you can't do anything, it's hard top." And so what happens, she did, she come in and set a hotplate on the thing. The nut put hotplates on it.

DC: Unprotected, obviously.

JM: On top of the big tables. They have twenty-eight of those tables. And I think they're still solid oak—most of them are still there. You know what I mean? But they're special, big, wide-open grain. And they're oak—they're oak straight this way, they're oak this way. They're cherry, and you have cherry and you have great big wide-open cherry grain. I like to try the big ones with a different kind: the cherry with a little bit of red in it. In other words, they have good tables and they're really good, and yet they want to keep them, right. And they'll send somebody in there that don't know what they're doing and tear up. You know what I mean? So I had to break them in, do what I could to break the one man in. But when he quits, they can't do the other. OK, now the next thing is, we had all of our lawyers' boys—they was 50 percent of them are over six foot seven. Did you know there was? The beds now were, over 60 percent of them, over six foot seven. My job was to make the rails and put the groove in it and stain them and put it on the bed. I pick the thing up, put a waste basket under it, pick the other end up, just made a bed! Throw the flaps up over the top, and here I am putting a rail under the bed, and then drop it down. One of them rails fell down and hit me both toenails at the same time! I had both toenails off at the same time. You know it fell over. Anyway, off of my waste baskets. Anyway, I had the wrong waste basket or something, I don't know what. But, now that was my other job, is to—every time a bunch of boys come in that's not going to move in the rooms that has the long rails—so I got to make them up a rail and go put the rails on, have to put up a—the back divots. Now, I've done—during the summer, I spend all summer staining all these—every table in the whole outfit, seventeen sections, not just one.

DC: Were you just working for the law school then?

JM: Working for the Lawyers Club. Now my job was to do that. In the meantime, every month I had to oil the pumps. I have to—every six months, I've got to oil the fans. The fans—the big fans—that you—they're four-foot thick, and they're as big as this room. Big rollers, big shafts about this big around. And I oiled and fill the little 'Coy—the real McCoy, I fill it full of oil. And I've got to go out and fill that thing full of oil every—you know what a real McCoy is.

DC: That's the—it was really for trains, but it's a lubricating device.

JM: Well, the real McCoy—McCoy made those, and they never had to oil the train again, only until it got in the station. Don't have to stop along the road and do it—and oil it. Well anyway, that's what I—I put oil in those things, and I keep them all full. I know when they're going to run out and how to adjust it. I have it right down. I know when the pumps is going to need oil. I know when the fans is going. I have to know when the vacuums—I got to take care of the vacuums. All right, now, that's another job. And then I've got to take care of everything—the hot water, the cold water, and everything, in the kitchen.

DC: So you were involved with the whole . . .

JM: My job is maintenance. My job is maintenance.

DC: Broadly defined. [laughs]

JM: And I liked the—another thing is, they—every time a person—you have 400 locks, you're going to—one's going to wear out. You know what I mean? Every time a lock wears out, they'll go and order a lock, a Corbin lock. It just fits in the hole, and it fits OK. They'll take that key and send it down to Muehlig [a local Ann Arbor business] and they'll get it matched up with a master key. So now a master key is going to fit it. Not only that, they may match it up with a grand master key. And the grand master key is going to fit the lock. It is—it comes back and you're going to use the same old key. Now that key fits that man's room over yonder—on the next section, somewhere in the next section somewhere, there's bound to be two keys alike. He just ordered them. You know what I mean? OK, you don't get the same—you don't get your choice of key. Now I take that little old book, and it's got several pages in it. Every room has a different number, every number has a different plunger in it, and the pins are within twenty—I'd say two-hundred-thousandths difference in every lock in this whole section in every—of every place. Do you know what I mean? What happens is, the first three numbers will tell you what section it is. The last two numbers tell you what room it is. But you've got to have these first three sections fit the same room, too. You know what I mean? In other words, these three will fit the same room. And it took me three years to get all the locks back to the key numbers again. And why I bet you, you go out there right now, and you can take a key and this key's going to fit that number and that number—do you know what I mean?

DC: So you had to do all that.

JM: Yeah, but I put them back to order. Because all the locks are two—one or two big keys—or pins are going to be too long. You know what I mean? And then you've got the—one key won't fit another section. You know what I mean? The first three. And it has an double ring around it. So it can give them a master key, and this little thin ring around this big cylinder. They'll have a thin ring around it and that's just another set of keys, for a master key. That's the grand master on that one. So you can have a master key and a grand master. It's the only grand master key I have ever seen. The whole building is the only grand master system that I've ever seen. I don't know any other building that uses—you'd have to ask Corbin. You know, Corbin would be the only person to tell you. Stanley

will tell you. We had Stanley's—Stanley's—the numbers on keys is backwards from Corbin's. Corbon's is 1-2-3—got this, with a winder out here. 1-2-3 that way. Stanley's is 1-2- this way. Then—they're backwards.

DC: Did you like that job?

JM: My job. I'll do it. And what it is, if they have something electrically wrong with anywhere, whatever it is, I'll go fix it. I'm an electrician. So what happens is, they hire a man and he will do the staining work, and he'll be afraid of electricity. They'll get the man that do the electricity, and he'll do the staining work, but he won't dig a hole in the ground, in the sewer line. He won't mess with the sewer line. The kitchen's out there—something wrong with the kitchen. My job is to go out and see what's wrong and go fix it. And, you know what I'm talking about?

DC: You were willing to do *all* these different things.

JM: I even went down through there—and they had the steam work—the steamer, cranking around. I found three valves put on backwards by the contractors. They put the—you know, the traps are on backwards. You know, a trap—in all steam work. Because is, what they does, it runs the water down here like this. And when it hits the steam, it shuts off. OK. It runs the water. It only lets the water out of the radiator so it can't crack. And all the water run out of the radiators—and if it backs up, they'll start cracking, popping – boom, boom. OK, you've heard those big noises—rumbles. OK, anyway, that's—my job is to take care of that. I take care of—it don't matter what the maintenance was, if it's in the line of maintenance, I'll do it. And they said I'm the only one they've ever had that would do that. You know, because you can't get a man to do the sewer line—he's out there doing this digging around in the—taking care of that end. You can't get him to do that end, and he has to go up there and take care of the computers. You know what I mean? So, my job was whatever my job was.

DC: You said something a long time ago about trying to organize the maintenance workers at U of M . . .

JM: Well, I got their name all in, got them turned all in, and then when they voted for it, they voted for the other man, for the other union, that's all.

DC: For the other union, OK. But you were trying to—how many people were—was this just at the Law Club?

JM: This was the Lawyers Club.

DC: How many people worked there?

JM: And we had fourteen janitors and me.

DC: And you were trying to organize the fourteen janitors.

JM: I *got* them organized. I got them all to sign this paper. They all signed the paper that says now—I explained it to them: you won't get a raise tomorrow. You don't expect the union to go over there and tell them that you want a raise. The union has to go to the bargaining committee. When they bargain for a new contract, then you'll get a raise. And if you are—forty percent of you—if fifty percent of you, signed up, you may get half of what you ask for. If you—closer to more of you—all of you signed up, you might not—*still* not get a hundred percent of what you're going to ask for.

DC: Why did you want a union at the Lawyers Club?

JM: Because a man is working for fourteen—he worked—he worked eight hours a day, and the woman was in charge—had a woman in charge. And then when they left, they had an old sergeant woman in charge. And it's a woman in charge. This colored man, he's a colored man—and he complained. He had fourteen kids, and he says, "I'm not making enough money to feed the kids. I'm having a hard time feeding the kids. If I could just get ten dollars more on a raise. Other people's getting ten dollars more." You know what I mean? Everybody's getting a different wages.

DC: Oh, really? There wasn't any uniform wage?

JM: No, no uniform. She paid him just whatever she wanted to pay him. She paid a white man more than she paid the colored man. So here's what it is—you are not getting enough of pay, and I know that some of them are getting a little more money than you are, not a whole lot. But there's no reason why—you're doing the same work—why can't you get that ten dollars. She cut him ten dollars short, and the next fourteen years he was there, he didn't get that ten dollars back. And here I am, working as maintenance, and I'm getting a hundred dollars more than any of them. I'm doing a hundred dollars more than any of them. And I'm not complaining about mine because we have no union to—it doesn't do any good to talk to a woman. That woman is an old stubborn woman, and she didn't like him because he was a colored boy. Anyway, he was working ten dollars less, and I went over and I told him, says, "I'm not looking at my wages. I'm looking at *their* wages. They're getting a hundred dollars *less* than I'm getting. They're even getting a big range in difference in which one they're working for. They all got the same number of rooms to clean up every day. You know, a section—one section is almost the same as the other section. And they had a section for each person, each janitor. See what I mean? So I lined them up and I signed them up and I told them—I got them all ready. And, sure enough, they changed to another union. But I don't care about that, it's still a *union*! They're still getting their wages, and they got fifty dollars raise from them. They got fifty dollars raise in a little while. Not very much, not very soon—about five years later they got it.

DC: But if this man wanted ten dollars more . . .

JM: He wanted ten dollars more. But at least, I got him signed up and they told him—you know what I mean—the union can tell that man: 'my men out there will walk off and go home if you tell them to'. If you, you know, if I say so. And he comes up with the wages.

At least all the same wages, you know what I mean? One old boy, he wanted different wages.

DC: He wanted them to be different.

JM: From the Lawyers Club. He says, "I can go in as a boy and change clothes to an old woman and walk through this thing and come up in the—you know the tunnels?—and come up in the bank out there and take money from a bank and come back in and put my clothes on and walk out. As a boy." And you know what? He did it! And what happens is, he told too many people. He even told me, and a lot of others. And I guess, somebody must have told the police. Because when he come out and was going up to the sink, the police says, "Come on out. We know where you are." He's climbing this ladder, coming up through a manhole out there. And the police is standing there waiting, says, "Come on up. We know who you are!" You know what I mean? They expected him—when they got the call—that he's coming in as a woman to rob the bank. It was funny. He was a little old short boy. I knowed him. He was my janitor. He's a janitor. You know, he just happened—you ain't supposed to tell everybody you're going to do that.

DC: Well that's not the smartest thing in the world to do.

JM: But everybody else thinks it's funny. Everybody thought it was funny. He was one of our janitors.

DC: Do you remember any cases of discrimination in some of the earlier jobs that you had? You mentioned that this one woman would pay people different wages and paid the black man ten dollars less because she didn't like . . .

JM: Yeah, well now, that was there, but . . .

DC: Yeah, but I mean, do you remember any cases like that, say at Dodge?

JM: Nothing at Dodge because we all got our—we all got our paycheck and they're—all paychecks were all alike. You know what I mean? And that says the union says they are all alike. You don't discriminate between each other. And that was in Dodge. That was UAW. Well now here's what I don't get. My job—my job was doing air conditioner. All right. That's a CIO-AF of L job. I'm in the UAW. Now, at this time, the UAW and the CIO and the AF of L is all together. Did you remember that they . . .

DC: They merged together in '55. They were apart for a long time. But they merged together.

JM: And they went together.

DC: Yeah.

JM: OK. Then it's '54 was when I was doing this, and they told me—and all I'm interested in—is more interested in getting my refrigeration license than I am doing the job. I want

my license. It's more—you know, I've been trying for twenty-two years to get in to refrigeration. I tried twenty-two years. I went to Florida—the charter's full. I went to Pennsylvania— the charter is full. I can't even get a job. I can't even get a job on, as . . .

DC: So you had your training but you couldn't get licensed to work.

JM: I can't get licensed. You got to have ten years' experience. All I want is the ten years' experience. And then I can get licensed. But anyway, I couldn't get that experience. Now, so what happens is, the AF of L got word of it. The CIO—how we going to do that? OK. Then the only thing you *can* do is to have a refrigeration—non-refrigeration man—putting these things together. So they'd take this here hose and they put a hose on them instead of copper tubing. [?] copper tubing. So they put these hoses on here, and it's got a plug in here that you put them together and twist them together and you put them together. This hose is already full of gas—the tank's full of gas, everything's full of gas, the compressor is full of gas. See what I mean? It's not air. It's gas. OK, they've already taken care of it. Now, all this man does is go in and put the hose together, and there *is* no refrigeration because he doesn't do a thing to refrigeration, you know what I mean? He doesn't have to do anything I had to do. OK. Anyway, he didn't adjust the valves—valve's already adjusted, anyway, whatever it is.

DC: He just put them together.

JM: Put them together. All right, and the AF of L and the CIO dropped off the UAW—well I mean, they fell apart, because there was too much difference. I mean, a steelworker has nothing to do with an autoworker, and an autoworker has nothing to do with the clerical worker, or anything else. You know what I'm talking about? There's nothing—they couldn't hold—I agree that if you strike with one, you're tearing everything down, and that would stop all of the truckers and everything. You know what I mean? The truckers and everything would walk out and says—I agree that it would do better. But now they're going to have to do better because the Republicans—I don't know if you're Republican or not—but the Republicans, all the Republicans are trying to break the union by cutting off their laws. In other words, even Engell [seems to mean Governor John Engler] put out that every worker if they strike—every teacher is union, teacher's union—every teacher that strikes will be charged five hundred dollars. Every union hall, the union itself, will be charged five thousand.

DC: Yeah, they have to pay the damages and all.

JM: And now, that's going to do what the—and now, they had a strike and nothing was done. They all stuck together—I don't care what you do. They can walk off and go home if they want to because they don't agree with it. Now, that's what I told these boys together. I told these boys that [loud voice] they told me if you organize this place, we will fire you.

DC: Where did they say this?

JM: At the Lawyers Club. And they told the boys, if they unionize, they will fire you. They told

all of our other men and scared them back. And I told them—I sat down with all of them and I told them, says, "Now if you all—you're not signed up. I've got the paper in my pocket. You don't have anything to do with it until I take this to the union and they sign you up. And then they will say you're signed up all at one time, and we will tell them that if you do, you will never have a non-union man back in here again." Because they will surround them, you know what I mean? In other words, they'll give them trouble. It backed them out—scared them. So I says, "Now you're not signed up. You don't belong to the union *until* I take this paper in there. And that way, we're all in the same boat. They got to fire one of us or fire all of us. And if they fire all of us, there's going to be some Lawyers Club people here, running around trying to get these rooms running. And they're not going to be workers." So now they'll take their choice. Come to find out, when they found out there was nothing said about—they didn't do a thing about it. They just went ahead and worked. In other words, everybody just been mum and went to work. They're union and went to work. Nothing was said, because I said I signed them up all at one time. Said, "I don't want to be signed up myself. I don't want to be signed up because I would get fired! You don't wanna be signed up because you'll get fired! Let's take this paper and put everyone down." And I know that the paper went in. And I thought it was funny. Everything you do, you think is funny.

DC: I understand your point, though, as individuals putting themselves on the line they could be picked off one by one, but together they had to think twice.

JM: Yeah. And he thought they'd come around and—a man would come around and send them—but I'm a maintenance man, and I'll talk to anybody everywhere—I can talk to you out there the middle of the yard, and nobody knows what I'm taking about. I can talk to you down in the basement, and nobody knows what I'm talking about. See what I mean? In other words, I'm crooked. [laughs]

DC: Well, cagey maybe, but I don't know about crooked. Well tell me about Ford's. We haven't talked about working here. Now did you start here—you have to refresh my memory now because I haven't listened to the tape . . .

JM: In '50—'64.

DC: '56?

JM: In '64.

DC: OK, yeah. So you worked here a little bit before you went to U of M, is that right?

JM: No, I went to U of M between. From '57 . . .

DC: Yeah. But I mean, did you start here before you went to U of M or not?

JM: No, I was maintenance man for eight years.

DC: OK, so you went from Dodge Main to U of M.

JM: '57, '55, '6—maybe '56—I don't know when it was. All I know is, I got there.

DC: OK, you got there. Why did you leave U of M?

JM: Well at two dollars an hour, and I went over here—I want thirty dollars an hour!

DC: OK.

JM: Ford is paying fourteen dollars an hour, maybe. They're paying—they get their union—they get their Blue Cross paid and that—if you count Blue Cross, that's twenty-five dollars at that time. You get Blue Cross paid, you get your—what is that little old stuff that's—I can't think of the name of which one goes together—Medicare. The Medicare and Medicaid and Blue Cross and all of that, the company's paying it. And then they're paying you wages, and they're paying me time and a half. And I'm working for two dollars an hour over here at the Lawyers Club. And it will take me twenty-five years at the wages they give me—it'll take me twenty-five years to get up to the wages that I quit when I left General Motors.

DC: So maybe the question is, why did you stay at U of M as long as you did?

JM: [pause] I was having fun. I was enjoying myself. I was enjoying myself, but I didn't—you can't go right into Ford unless you—you got to wait until all the strikes are over, or you're waiting till they're making money or something. They're not hiring—they're not hiring at Ford's every day. They haven't hired in ten years at Ford.

DC: Right. Now you must have had children by this point, right? When were your children born?

JM: '52 to '50-—'48 to '56. Danny is—Joyce is '48, Danny I think is '52, Davy's '54, Theresa is '56. [birth years, not ages?]

DC: OK. So four children.

JM: Yeah. Now we've got that straight.

DC: Well, your youngest is almost the same age I am.

JM: Huh?

DC: Your youngest is about the same age I am.

JM: You're just a kid.

DC: Yeah. [laughs] Some days I feel that way.

JM: You're just a kid.

DC: Well, did that matter at all to you as far as which job you had? Were you able to support your family OK working at U of M?

JM: Yeah, I had—well, like I said, I made two dollars an hour, and they [the other janitors] made way down there, one dollar.

DC: So by comparison you were doing OK, but I mean, did you feel like—how were you living in those days?

JM: Well, OK. I lived in Milan. And I bought a lot out there. I don't know how much I paid for that lot. But I bought a lot. And then when the other man burned his house down, I got that lot, too. So, he burned his house down.

DC: A little insurance claim, or what?

JM: Yeah. He didn't get the insurance, because he burnt three of them out before.

DC: A little suspicious, huh.

JM: The insurance says he burnt three before—three of them before. Anyway, then this old house, it came from Eloise, a little three-room house—a little four-room house—come from Eloise.

MM: You know where that is? It's near Dearborn.

DC: OK, no, I didn't know that.

JM: Eloise is the prison camp, the women's prison camp. [Eloise was a State Hospital for the mentally ill, located in Westland, Michigan]

DC: Oh, OK. No, I wasn't familiar with that at all.

JM: In Westland. So they got three little houses from there. And they moved these little houses in, and all you got to do is to dig a hole around and put a basement in it for them—not a basement, but a wall for the house to sit on.

MM: Foundation.

JM: So you pour the cement in the hole, dig the hole about four foot, and pour all the cement in, then you put—block it up so high, and then you set the house down on it. So I did that. And, I lived in that little old house all the time I was living—while I was going to the University. I drive it—and I go out, and I buy me a car. Every time I get a rerun [meant refund] from my taxes. I got a hundred dollars back from my taxes every year. Well I'd

take that hundred dollars and go buy me a car. And them cars was—some of them good, some bad, and they always worked. So I'd go over to Westland—I'd go over to Westland—there's four car dealers there, and I ask each—in Westland, "Have you got any good cars back there that's good and run-able, but old models, that you can't sell them—you want to scrap them, have to scrap them." They'd always say, "Yeah, I got one back there that's got a good motor in it." You know what I mean? I'll give you a hundred dollars for it. I got a hundred and five dollars—or I got ninety-four dollars one time. It don't matter, whatever it is, my paycheck—I got 94, 96, 100, 110. I'll buy me a new car. I go in—and one man—I went in and one man, he says, "I got fifty of them. Go out and pick out which one you want. I got fifty cars out there. Go and pick out—for a hundred dollars you can have any one you want." Well I didn't have time to look at it, and I walked off and leave. I don't want to buy—I'm wanting to buy one. I went over here to Buick—Buick, right over here on Pine Road, and the man says, "I've got a brand new car. It's got the grille out of it. It's a hot-rodder, and he's overhauled the motor, he's overhauled the transmission, he's overhauled—new tires on it, and new wheels, and everything, but the grille's out of it." I says I'd never be able to find this for a hundred dollars. I'd never be able to buy a grille to fit that car. I never found a lot to fit it. So I turned him down. And that was a good car. That really would run me three or four years, you know what I mean? I might have run that car fifteen!

DC: Sure. Did you move to Milan when you took the University of Michigan job?

JM: No, I was out there before, whatever. That's when I bought my house out there.

DC: Do you remember when you bought that house?

JM: [pause] '58, maybe. No, I don't know, it was—because in '58s when I went to the university.

DC: Yeah, you would've been at the university already then.

JM: Uhhh—it was in '50-, ah . . .

DC: Do you remember if any of your kids were born when they lived in that house?

JM: I got here in '52. So it was probably '54. It wasn't '53. It was '54.

DC: Sounds like just about after you got laid off from Dodge.

JM: Well, no, it wasn't during that time—before I got laid off yet, probably. But anyway, because when I left Dodge, I had to go to the university and drive all the way all the time. And I drove it all the time.

DC: Where did you live before you moved to Milan?

JM: In an apartment in Detroit.

DC: OK. Where in Detroit was it?

JM: Now, OK. What is the Polish town?

DC: Hamtramck?

JM: What is Polish town called?

DC: Hamtramck.

JM: Hamtramck. OK, a little place near Hamtramck. Just a little old apartment. A good apartment.

DC: So why did you move to Milan?

JM: Because, they was selling those little old houses out there for so much—three or four hundred dollars, I don't know what it was. I went out, and I says, I can lay that little old house. I put me a block right underneath it, and put blocks under it and set it down. I put a toilet in it, and went out and drilled me a well on this side and put a septic tank on that side. And I had a garden there, a big garden. I had two acres of ground—well so what?

DC: Was that an attraction, to have that much land?

JM: It was four hundred seventy-five feet from my front gate to the back fence back there. Four hundred and seventy-five feet. And I had—when I bought that other—I got the other two lots. So, I bought it. I don't know how much I gave the other man, but all I know is whatever it was, it was full of oak timber. I could just cut that oak timber and probably sold it and got my money back. Anyway.

DC: Well let's go back up to Ford then. You took the job here because it paid so much better than working at the Lawyers Club, and you had benefits and all that . . .

JM: Yeah, that's why I come here from there.

DC: And they happened to be hiring. So what did you do? What was your job when you moved over here?

JM: I was hired in—they told me I could have an electrical inspector job, but [short pause] then I took electrician's job. Because I'm signed up here. I says, "I didn't come here to work on the line. I didn't come here to be an inspector. I came here to get my electrician's license."

DC: You still wanted that training.

JM: Well anyway, twenty-two years and the man, he says, "I'll put you on the list." And, sure

enough, I had already started to hydraulic school. I'm halfway through hydraulic school, because I can't get electrical school. So I'm halfway through hydraulic school at the university at Ford. And so I—and over here, I was the first person to sign up for the company.

MM: Washtenaw Community College.

JM: What is this big school over here?

DC: Washtenaw Community College.

JM: Washtenaw Community College. I was the first customer to sign up for that, because I'd already been over there, and I waited in line for four hours because I know they're going to sign up at 12:00, and so I got there at 8:00 and sit around waiting to do that. I was the first for the university. I was the first pioneer of refrigeration. You call it pioneer refrigeration because you was the one that done it. Three hundred and fifty-six cars. All I did was just go out and hunt people—I went out and hunt people to be teachers. I found a good man out there, and he says, "It's all right. It's all right, but I don't think I want the job." And the teacher I had—was a little colored man—was for math. He'd get in trouble. I said, "You're getting in trouble!" He said, "Get me out of it!" [laughs] And I'd help him, on his . . .

DC: Oh, you're helping him with the math.

JM: This was, I think it was algebra. And it was algebra. I had math, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, logarithm—logarithm and calculus, anyway, all of them

DC: Now you would've been nearly forty years old at the time, right?

JM: I don't know how old I was.

DC: Well this is right after you took the job here, which was '64.

JM: About '64, yeah.

DC: So sometime after that, you'd be nearly forty years old.

JM: Well see, I'd had all this other math training. Because I liked them.

DC: And so, you had an electrician's job here. You were taking classes at WCC . . .

MM: In huydraulics.

JM: I had—after I quit, they wouldn't allow no other Ford's to go back over to Washtenaw.

DC: After you quit—what do you mean, after you quit what?

JM: After I quit—after I got out of that. Milo was the first man to graduate from Washtenaw Community. Milo was my buddy. He just had a few starts—a few classes ahead of me. OK, anyway. I didn't care whether I graduated, because all I'm interested in is my license. I got my license.

DC: You did?

JM: Yeah. I quit. I got my license.

DC: So you quit school, or . . .

JM: No, I quit classes.

DC: The classes, OK. How did you get your license?

JM: You go through the course. You go through the apprenticeship course. The apprenticeship course accounts for all these courses to be taken. You got to go through the courses—each book, you got through them. And then you got to be—have micro-processing—they teach it right in Ford office up there.

DC: You can take it at Ford, all right.

JM: Right in the office. They—micro-processing. I got nineteen of those little old certificates. You know what I mean?

DC: That's how you got your license, then, through Ford classes.

JM: I got my license, yeah. I don't have no pocket. You know, you're supposed to carry them around in your pocket, but I think I put them away because I don't want to tear them up.

DC: So how did that affect your work here at Ford to have that license?

JM: I'm electrician.

DC: You're an electrician then. So you get an electrician's job.

MM: Paid him the extra money.

JM: I'm electrician. They tore out three and a half acres—five and a half acres of ground in there. Dug it down four feet and they filled it up with sand, and they put cement on top of it, and they put five—three hundred—they took three hundred computers out of that—they may have put five hundred back. You know what I'm talking about?

DC: So, where exactly was this? This is here at Ford's?

JM: That's right here at Ford's.

DC: OK, and so . . .

JM: Everything over there is run with a computer now.

DC: Sure. I'm still trying to figure out exactly what you did. You were an electrician now, you've come back, you've gotten your license—what exactly did you do when you . . .

JM: I've run the second floor.

DC: You ran the second floor. And what happened on the second floor?

JM: Now, that is—no, you do—every six months you trade, or they maybe move you. If you're apprenticed they move you every six months to a different job, to a different . . .

DC: So you can learn something new.

JM: Well, your different job. You're also going to a different time of work—a shift. You're on a different shift. I went thirteen different shifts in a row, a different one, and never hit the same one again. Anyway, because what they're doing, they laid me off a week. One of them was a week off. And right on—go through another and then another week off.

DC: Now was this part of your training? I'm trying to make sure I follow this. When you were doing this . . .

JM: A different shift at a different place is a different training because you got a different man. I work with the genius over there—you work with the geniuses. Well, you don't always get what—learn from the geniuses. You may be learning from some boy that don't know much about it. You know what I mean?

DC: Who doesn't have the official training.

JM: And you may learn. You may learn things from him.

DC: So is this before you got your license?

JM: Well a course is the way they teach you to be an electrician. It's the way they teach you to be electrician.

DC: Right. But now that you—once you became an electrician, once you had your license, then they had you running the second floor—is that what you're saying?

JM: I ran the second floor for about three years.

DC: OK. Well tell me what you did running the second floor.

JM: I set right here, for five minutes. I had thirty-four tickets in one day.

DC: And what are tickets?

JM: A ticket will come in. The boss will bring a ticket and he'll lay it on the desk and you grab it and you run out there and you fix that machine. That machine won't run. Something's wrong with it.

DC: So they're repair tickets that are coming in . . .

JM: It's repair—it's electrical job. If it don't run, they call for electrician. One boss come in and he says, "Get out there and fix it." I says, "I'm electrician. There's no electrical plug going—electricity going to that thing." He says, "It's got lights on it. It's got lights on it." But did you know those lights are just red paint and blue green. In other words, they're just flippers in there. And they're shiny lights. And you can't tell if they're burning or not. You got to put your hand over like this to see if they're burning. They're not burning. There's no electricity going through that machine. See, my job was electrical. And if it's a computer, even take the computer apart and take the boards out and go put it in the floor and bring back another board and put it in and program it and tell the man to go. Wind it up and go. You know what I mean? In other words, he's got to push—cycle this table around to this one. And he's got to push the table over here, and bring it up, bring it apart, bring it over, and drop it down, there's a part on it. And they've got to push the automatic on that button and then they goes—moves the table over to the next one. There's eight stations on them, most of them—four stations or whatever it is. There's eight stations on a lot of them, six on some. And anyway, he stepped over here and he'll put this part on it, or whatever it is. And he'll run it through a cycle and it'll say, "Automatic." And he'll push automatic. And when it gets all of them automatic, he pushes the automatic start, automatic button, and the thing takes off and starts running. You know what I mean? So now, I got to find out what's wrong with it. And the one, there's a machine right over there right now, it's got eighty different stops on it, and that's eighty different backups. The print goes here. Page one—fifteen twenty—it's got eighty-four pages of it on it like this. And what it is—is be on this page, it'll go to that page, it'll back to this page, and will go to this page—and there's eighty different ones on that. And they're not necessarily—need to be done that way. They told Japan, "Rewrite those things." Rewrite those prints. You got eighty backups—eighty stops, eighty skips. Do you know what I mean? In other words, you don't need all those skips. They're just a way of doing—Japan, messing up our boys—and what they done, they bring in twenty-eight of their Japanese, and they're not even American citizens, and they'll stay here the rest of their life working for Ford and they're not American citizens. They'd even sent you—get them a card and send them to—where they were getting them a card—and sending them to go get their license to vote. The way they did that is they sell them an inch of land. In these parks—these parks up here will sell you—will sell Japan land, and they will sell it an inch at a time. Now he's a landowner. So he got the right to vote. See what I'm talking about? I think they cut that out.

MM: Yeah, they have. They don't have that anymore.

JM: You know what I mean? Our government had to cut it out.

DC: Sure. Let's see. When you were starting this job in '64- '65, you finally became an electrician—you're getting all these work orders and such . . .

JM: See I've been doing all this . . .

DC: That was a union job, I take it. You know, the electrician's job.

JM: Oh, that's union. Union's been on—I don't know when it was, way back a long time ago.

DC: According to your board up here, you got the charter in '41.

JM: '41.

DC: Yeah, here in Ypsilanti. But . . .

JM: Walter Reuther. Walter Reuther started . . .

DC: Were you ever involved with the union at all back in the 1960s?

JM: No, because I'm too young to do that. I never even got the right to go to Walter Reuther's hideout.

DC: Oh, that Black Lake . . .

JM: Black Lake. I've never been to Black Lake. And now they say, well you should've had the right to go.

MM: You can go now.

JM: Huh?

MM: You can go now.

JM: I can go now, but who wants to go now? I wanted it back in the days when I was—I might have—I was popular enough that I might've wanted to run for other. But I should go up there and see what they're teaching first, and I never got the right to go there, because I wasn't a big shot.

DC: OK, all right. The big shots got to go up there, huh.

JM: Well, now I'm kind of stubborn, because I'm not going to kiss ass to go. You know, if you got to kiss ass, I don't need to go.

DC: Were you an electrician, then, all the way through? Is that what you did? When did you retire, by the way?

JM: I . . .

End of Tape II, Side A

Begin Tape II, Side B

JM: . . . I was sixty-six years old and you have to have eighty-five points, or thirty years. Well I only had twenty-seven years. I was either—work there three more years, or just go ahead tell the man that I've got my points. I was sixty-six years old and I'm twenty-seven more points per year. So that counts up eighty-five. I've only got—I need eighty-five. So, I just took the points, and I left. It's either that or work three more years. Well I wasn't working at all. So I really didn't need to stay there three more years.

DC: Why weren't you working at all?

JM: Because, I was electrician and I was installing pipe—conduits—and hooking up all these machines. They had—you know the machines over there have ninety-five—they have ninety-five miles of wire in them.

DC: I was going to say, they probably changed a lot since when you started that job.

JM: Well, have you heard of—no, I think they're cutting down on the wiring. But you've heard of them things having—well, there's forty-five miles of wire in that big one right there, the first you see in there. Anyway, I put that—I hooked that one up. Now, I was—that is construction. They call that, you know, you're doing construction.

DC: You're setting it up.

JM: You got to be so many hours of construction, you got to be so many hours of maintenance, you got to be so many hours of computer, or—you know what I mean? So whatever it is, they had different things you had to be doing. Well, what happens is, I had—through that course. So, I've been over in the old building. If they don't have any electrician over there, OK I'll run it. You know what I mean? They got me. My job is to go out and fix anything—anything. They even had them—we have to break in their code. They didn't teach you how to break in a machine that's hooked up electronically. This thing here, or this computer, it has got a code in it. Well they teach you how to break that code. And if you got a bank, it's the same code. You know what I mean? Some boys break the code. Except they don't break the code, they break one that's whistling. You know? OK, you see that. Well, we got books on how to do that. And our job was to learn it because every time we do it to a machine, somebody else has got their number on it. They got their code.

DC: So it sounds like you really had to move with the times, you had to change with the times, because these computerized machines would have been not as sophisticated, if they existed at all . . .

JM: All right now, all these are computerized. Now here's what Ford said in '67 I think it was, or '68. They have machines that have big boards about this long and, you see them—they're big thick things about this thick and they're six foot high and they're full of relays. OK, they're taking all those out, and not one man over there knows anything about a computer, not one electrician. OK, they've got to teach them. How's that man going to know if they don't start teaching them? They start with micro-processing courses. They start with relays. In other words, chips, just plain old chips. And once you learn about what the chips and everything, and you learn the hookup, and you learn what they're good for and everything—and it's up to you then to be able to read that print. Not only that, they had about four different kinds of prints. We had German prints. We can't read them German prints! And German prints is not and know-nots. It's a not and a know-not. In other words, it's like pulling this light with a chain on it, and if you pull it three times it's still off—you're still on if it's on, you know what I mean? In other words, this here—that's what the know-not is. And it's up to you—they got a lot of intakes, inlets, outlets, and all that stuff. And it's the same print. And they had one machine that when I was—just when I was a new apprentice, they got eighty-five pages of it. Well, I got to figure out which ones—which machine you're talking about, because we treat them as a machine—we have every press that's on there, or every tester that's on there is a different machine. Do you know what I mean? And that has a different print, a print from this other—if you have a press here, it's going to be a different print from this here tester. See what I mean?

DC: So did you find that interesting to have all these challenges, or was it annoying, or what . . .

JM: No [short pause] it's my job. That's what I came here to learn. I came there to learn skilled trade. I wanted on electrician. I almost didn't make it. They almost put me on hydraulic. But the man says, 'We got an opening. Go get it!' 'We got an opening.'

DC: But you said that when you retired, you weren't doing any work. What did you mean?

MM: Oh God.

JM: OK. OK. No, I was one of those walk-around boys. I walked around—I yelled, "Sit down." You walk around to each department, and I was at that time—I was worldwide. I was all up the whole plant. There's different sections of that plant. Well I'm all over that plant because I'm on construction. Now, what happens is, the one I liked about it was a great big—the five-inch lines. The fiveinch lines would hook up more than one machine. You know what I mean? So they have a boy over there that's drunk. And this is the only two-inch line in the whole building. And they said that we waited on him for three weeks now, three or maybe six weeks, and we can't get—he can't hook that machine up. And they got four machines—we need them now! You know what I mean? And they were—what they were doing is hot and cold testers. It goes in this machine and it brings it down

to forty below zero. That same part goes through that little hole—open—doors open up and it goes over and it goes to the next machine—it's about that far apart—goes over and in that one, and that's going to heat it up to three hundred degrees.

DC: Right, extremes, yeah.

JM: And then it made me come back. And anyway, whatever it is, they got four of those things hooked up. Four of them. They want them hooked up now because we got to test those coils. Did you know the coils are flunking a hundred percent? They're cracking open a hundred percent. Because there is no gauge of how cold is cold—sixty below, I think it was. There's no cold—they don't have to go sixty below. There's no scale of how cold is cold and how hot is hot. And they hadn't established what needed to be done. And they'd crack them if they'd raise it up and see how hot it's got to be—throw them in to where they quit cracking. You know what I mean? Cracks the frame. All right, if they find that out, then they'd have something to start with. And they wouldn't do that. They just let them crack them, and then there was—who's running the outfit, you know what I'm talking about? Well it wasn't my job to tell them who's running the outfit or nothing, but I don't care, because that's not electrical. My job is to hook a job, hook it up. Well anyway, I hooked them up. This man—boy over here was kind of goofing off. He was a little bit of a drunk, I think. And anyway, he was electrician. But they couldn't get him to work. And what happens is, they sent me over there and I ask him, "When do you want it?" He says, "Yesterday." They always want something yesterday. OK. I went over there and I says, "I'll put in the conduit first. It's going to take a day, or maybe a little over. I'll pull the wire. It's going to take a whole day to pull the wire. And you're putting in 440, and you're putting in a hundred amps of 440, going to each one of these machines—and you know what I mean? In other words, it's not a little cable. It's a great big cable this big around. And I'm putting it in, and in about four days, four or five days, I had that thing hooked up. See? But the man didn't know how to start. The boy didn't know how to start. He wasn't a real good construction man. First I run pipe, two-inch pipe, and I got them over there and back, and it'll fix them up. Anyway, and then I pulled the wires, and we've had—even—we even had one boy that was a nut, bad enough to go up to the office in executive meetings and talk to the—presidential meetings, you know what I mean? Executive meetings and things like that. We've had the presidential man come down and talk to us in our meetings. He's a good man. If he's a good man and he wants to get along with us, he comes down, tells us what we've got and what's going to happen—you know what I mean? What are we going to do with those machines out there? Because certain machines are not enough to pull a load. Not enough to make production. So anyway, things like that—[?] problems. And he asks us what would we do! And we were all—some of them were pretty good to solve his problems.

DC: It sounds like it.

JM: Some of them will solve his problems, but I've even—that's why I'm out to a boy's house solving some of his problems. He don't know some things, and I—some things, well I've had experience, so I help him. You know what I mean?

DC: Did any of your children ever go to work in these plants?

JM: Huh?

DC: Did any of your children ever go to work in the plant?

JM: No, he don't—he says it's too noisy. And at that time it was noisy. We've had it a hundred and twenty decibels. Speakers going a hundred and twenty decibels. That's louder—that's louder than a horn of a semi-truck blowing right here in this room. And that's too loud. And yet they wouldn't do—yt, the union—the company won't do anything about it. You know what I mean? The company wouldn't do anything about it.

DC: What did your wife do during these years?

JM: She worked for University of Michigan.

DC: She did, OK.

JM: She worked for the University of Michigan, and at 4:00 or 4:30 I'm there. They said, "You drive awful fast." I got to get there in five minutes because she's waiting on the street.

DC: Ah, you picked her up and headed on home.

JM: I picked her up and brought her home.

DC: OK. What did she do at the University of Michigan?

JM: She was working at East Quad. In East Quad they done everything from kitchen to making beds. Make beds. And you go in making beds and dusting the place and, yeah.

DC: Students were spoiled back then, weren't they?

MM: What year did you move to Ann Arbor?

JM: Huh?

MM: What year did you move to Ann Arbor?

JM: '62.

DC: '62, OK.

MM: He had another house built. This one he had built.

DC: OK, all right, '62.

JM: I moved in ‘62. And I moved in a house next door to where I knew I was going to have the house built. And it takes—after they built the house, the man declared bankruptcy, so it takes two years before I got there, ‘59 to ‘62. And I moved in this other house next door so I could keep an eye on that place. And if I didn’t keep an eye on it, they’d sell it again. And they sold it!

DC: Oh, they did?

JM: Yeah! And the man—I caught a person over there, a man and a woman over in the yard, and I told them, I says, “Now you think you’re buyig’ this place, but I have a contract that says that I have bought this place. I have put a down payment on it, and if you think you’re going to get it, there’s going to be a lawsuit going on. You’re going to be waiting for another one, till that lawsuit is finished.” Because I’m sure going to take him—my lawyer’s going to take him to court.

DC: So where’s the house?

JM: I’m living in it. I live in my house and she lives in hers. We like our houses so well. We’ve lived in the house for five years. She lived in her house for five years and I was in mine for five years.

DC: Lots of room that way. Did you ever miss West Virginia? Did you ever want to go back?

JM: Well, my folks lived down there. And I bought a car, a Road Runner—you know what a Road Runner is?

DC: Well, by name.

JM: A road runner is the biggest car you can get—it’s the heaviest car on the road right now. It’s two ton and a half. Because they put smaller motors in the others.

MM: It’s a Buick.

JM: The Cadillac. Yeah, the Cadillacs and Buicks and all of them got smaller motors. So anyway, my car is the heaviest car on the road, outside of the van. Vans is heavier.

DC: I’ll look out for you.

MM: He’s a good driver. Very careful. [laughs]

DC: Well that’s good.

JM: Anyway, it’s—I drove down there to see my folks and there is a—you know all of Ford Motor Company would drive to—you had a holiday. All of their employees would drive to West Virginia.

DC: [laughs] So there were a lot of West Virginians in the plant.

JM: Oh, they would hire them quicker than they will their own right here, because the boys here are lazy. The West Virginia boys are supposed to be—a little more energy. And I was, maybe I didn't have much energy, but I tried to make up for it by working two jobs.

DC: Yeah, I was going to say that takes a fair amount of energy.

JM: I came out ahead! I'm trying to keep her from starving.

DC: Well can you think of other questions I should have been asking, that I didn't ask?

JM: I think I . . .

MM: Except all these double jobs you worked.

JM: Well, that's what I was . . .

DC: Did you work double jobs even when you moved over here to Ford?

JM: [pause] Uh . . .

M: Well, when you got laid off.

DC: Oh, when did you get laid off?

JM: Well see, every time you get laid off—General Motors and Ford, before, didn't lay off at the same time. But about 19—since 1957, they started putting them together. But before that, from '46 on, General Motors would lay off in the wintertime and Ford would lay off in the summer time, and I'd work both of them—I got seniority at both of them. And, you know what I mean?

M: Go from one to the other.

JM: Finally they called me both back at the same time in '57. And I'm working—and I'm working at the Lawyers Club. And I says—both of them called me back, so I says, I quit them both.

DC: So you didn't take the other job at that point.

JM: No, I didn't take that job. Because they—I'm working at the Lawyers Club, and I'm making—I was helping them as much as I was helping me.

DC: Can you think of anybody else who wasn't at that retiree meeting who might be a good person to talk to who might be interested?

[There is some talk here about other people to interview or who already have been interviewed, etc.]

DC: . . . I can probably turn this off now, unless you start telling more stories, I'll turn it back on.

JM: . . . See, I worked for one company, this was pulling pillars [very dangerous work in a mine], and I worked as electrician. I did all of his work for quite awhile . . .

DC: In the coal mine.

JM: Yeah, for maybe a year. And then I went to ask him if I could get on the electrical force, and he didn't know my name. He had never heard of me. He didn't know who did the work up there. I told him, says, "Guess who's doing the work up there on your—in your coal mines?" And he didn't know. I ain't going to tell him my name then. No, I walked off and left him. I never did go back, because I don't have anything there. But then I went over to Cow Creek [near Richwood, West Virginia], and I worked in the coal mines over there, and I was shot fireman [inserted explosives].

DC: Now were you alternating between Detroit and West Virginia?

JM: No, this is in West Virginia—everything in West Virginia, coal mines in West Virginia.

DC: I know coal mines are there, but some of those years you were working up here, too, so . . .

JM: No, I didn't get up here until—I'm trying to find out when I did—I got up here in '52. During the steel strike.

DC: Steel strike is in '52. All right.

JM: OK, so if you have '46 or something, well then . . .

DC: I'll change that.

JM: You'll change that.

DC: I'll change that. '52.

JM: Because you didn't know me before 1952.

DC: OK. That's when you came up north. All right, well I appreciate it—

End of Interview