

Katie Neumann Interview
March 18, 2002
At Ms. Neumann's home
Shelby Township, Michigan
Transcribed by Marie O'Brien
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DC: . . . I've heard some people say, "Well, I'm worried I might say something that I'll regret," and if they do that, they can always decide later that you don't want that to be on the record.

KN: Well, I won't say anything.

DC: But no one's ever said anything they wanted to cut out, so . . .

KN: No, no. Like I said, "Hey," I was grateful for all—like I say, the pros and cons.

DC: [referring to tape recorder] Do you mind if I put this on the table? Is that OK?

KN: Oh sure, hon! [referring to the table] This is forty years old, so . . .

DC: I alwas get furniture that my kids can scuff up pretty hard, so . . .

KN: I'm a great-grandma, so even—you can hear one of my grandkids [she raps on the table].

DC: OK, all right. I won't take that many liberties though. [setting up tape recorder—a pause] Are you fighting off a cold?

KN: Yeah. Yeah, I run outside, to let the dog out, and the door out here—I have to keep an eye on my dog, you know. [more delays]

DC: I was telling you on the phone, that I have a whole slew of questions, and sometimes I'll go through a whole interview and only ask one or two of them that are actually on my list—you know, we never can be sure what direction everything will go in, but we can at least get started with some of these. [still fiddling with the tape recorder, while Ms. Neumann fills out the release of rights form].

DC: All right, I appreciate that. I'll start with something really, really basic—um, where were you born?

KN: I was born and raised in Rochester, which is Stoney Creek.

DC: Right here?

KN: Yeah, right here.

DC: I think you might be one of the first people I've ever talked to who was actually born near

this area.

KN: Is that right?

DC: Yeah, it seems like everyone has come from all over.

KN: Yeah, they made—I can still see the monuments, I mean the road that I lived down, but you know everything's gone. But I know where we lived, the farm, you know. I lived on a farm.

DC: OK. On a farm, OK.

KN: Yeah, born and raised on a farm.

DC: How long had your parents been on that farm?

KN: I couldn't remember how many years. I think I was—I was—see I was born and raised there, see then we took and moved to Lakeville, which is called Leach Road now, and my Dad had built another house and farm there and then we took and lost it. And we came back to the place that I was born into. So, we maybe was there about—I don't know, about ten, fifteen years, I don't know.

DC: Um. Let's see, do you remember—I'm trying to figure this out—were your parents both born in this area, too?

KN: No, they were born in Poland. They come to—my Mother come over here when—she only went to the third grade, and she was seventeen she come over here, and—with my Dad. And she—from there, they come to Yonkers, New York and then they went to Florida, and from Florida, why, then they come to—oh gosh—a city in Detroit here [most likely Hamtramck]. And then from there, why then we went on that farm on Stoney Creek Road. Yeah.

DC: OK. So had they been farmers in Poland?

KN: Farmers all my life, yes, oh yes. All our life. We used to go to the Eastern Market. We used to pick everything from—well the farm gardening, you know, truck gardening, is what they'd call it. And we used to go to the Ferry Market [also called the Chene-Ferry Market] in—it's in Hamtramck there, and we raised—they raised cows, too. We sold milk. And I used to have to take and watch the cows on the road, you know, with my brother, and then they took and—the man that owned it was very kindhearted, so he was able to—well, sell it to Stoney Creek and so we had to move.

DC: So did you own the farm, or . . .

KN: No, no. They let us have it for nothing, and just that we took care of it, that somebody lived

there. And I was able to go to—catch a bus to go to Rochester High School. And I went there. I had a year and a half to go before I finished, and then we had to—when we moved, we moved over here on Schoenherr Road, which is a mile down. And I never—was no school, no bus to go to. My folks couldn't have a car, you know. So—and I went to work in the pottery. Yeah, I worked in the pottery, and then I got married in—'41, I believe. '41—yes, I got married in '41. And then I went to work there for quite a few years making dishes. And, oh I worked there for three and a half years, I've got it. And then I worked a couple months at Fisher Body's. And I got laid off of Fisher Body's, and I stopped in to Pontiac Motors there, and you know, and I used to go past there to go to Fisher Body's. I used to see all that smoke and that coming out of there, and I thought, "Oh my God." I knew it was a factory, but I said, "Oh my God, how could those people work there?" But I got laid off and I needed a job. I went to work—I needed a washer and a dryer—and so I went to work at Pontiac Motors and they hired me that same day, and I went to work the next day, and I started to work there three—three six—I went there three five [March 5] and I got hired in three six [March 6] in '45.

DC: 1945? OK.

KN: In 1945, yeah.

DC: Wow. Let's see if we can back up a bit and we'll sneak back up on that. That's pretty interesting stuff.

KN: Well maybe when you get this together, you can maybe make, you know [pause] . . .

DC: What do you have in front of you there?

KN: No, not this—this was just some of the papers that I had.

DC: Oh, I see, OK.

KN: This is from Pontiac Motors, they give me. And then my retirement papers, and this is just from—they had given me when I had—when I worked at—I worked in different plants. I worked—then I went to start in the foundry. In the core room, and I worked in the core room there. Why, Fisher Body's was so different. They had—I had somebody tell me what the whistle was for, and when I went to Pontiac Motors in the core room there, the whistle blew and everybody start running. I didn't know where they were going, so I had to ask somebody, what's going on? And they told me it was lunch or a break. And I worked there and then they needed some help right in the foundry part, and I used to have to clamp their boxes. They used to put the cores in there, make body parts, that they pour the iron, you know. And they used to have to—great big clamps—and we used to—I used to have to put four of them and pound them in there. And they'd take and pour that iron in. Many times the iron would spill over. Like I always said, I always did kind of a Polish jig, you know, there, from getting that—from the iron, you know, overflowing. And then from there they transferred me to—oh, the gun job. I worked in a gun job for . . .

DC: During the war, this is?

KN: During the war, yeah hon. The war come. I worked in a gun plant, in Plant 15. And umm—oh, I thought I had that paper here—[pause followed by shuffling of papers]. Can you stop that for a second?

DC: Sure. [turns off tape recorder]

KN: Did you want to hear that part there?

DC: I definitely do. I want to sneak up on it again, though, because I wanted, before we got too far along, I wanted to ask you a little bit more about what it was like growing up on the farm, and doing farm work.

KN: I'll tell you what, it made me what I am today, and they used to send me in a couple hours ahead of time to make the supper or dinner, what we had, you know. And . . .

DC: How old were you when you started to do that?

KN: Oh, probably 11, 12 years old. And this is why I hate cooking now, I guess. [slight giggle] And then we had to take and pick everything for the market and we used to take like our cucumbers—we used to have a lot of cucumbers we used to raise—and we used to put them in a pile because there was so many, and then we used to have to sort them out by sizes. And the onions—we used to have to clean the onions, and the beets, and the carrots, and when I was fourteen years old, my brother—we had a great big, what do you call that, a stake truck— and I used to go with my brother, load it down and he made me—he said he was gonna teach me how to drive. And I just got up, just out of the country into Rochester, and he took over while—he took and made me drive all the way up to De—to Hamtramck. I mean, through Hamtramck and all that. And so this is how I learned how to drive. Because I had to—I couldn't, you know, and they had the street cars there at that time. And oh, my goodness, the street cars would go in the middle of the road and I never drove, you know, those stake trucks are big, but it made me what I am today.

DC: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

KN: I have seven brothers and sisters.

DC: OK. And where do you fit in?

KN: Um—let's see—John, Mary, Tony, Frank, me. I was the fifth one.

DC: Fifth, OK.

KN: Fifth one, yeah, I was the fifth one.

DC: And so, when you were young, were all your siblings working on the farm as well?

KN: My brother—yes they did for awhile there, then my brothers, two brothers, got a job in Detroit at Chevrolet Gear and Axle, at that time, and the other one went to Briggs. Briggs, and got a job there. But they'd come home on the weekends.

DC: How old were they when they got their jobs?

KN: My oldest brother John, he was the only one that went through high school, and he worked himself to go through high school. And—well, so when he got out of school, he must've been how old—oh, he—out of school, to eighth grade—he went to the ninth grade, so how old would he be? About fourteen, fifteen years, something like that?

DC: Fourteen, fifteen, yeah.

KN: Yeah. And they got us a lot of—I remember he used to take us to the show. It was ten cents to go to show, and he'd take all the neighbor kids there, we'd get on the—jump on that stake truck and go to show for ten cents apiece.

DC: Would that be in Rochester?

KN: In Rochester, yeah.

DC: So how often would you go down to the Eastern Market or down to Hamtramck?

KN: Twice a week—on a Wednesday and on a Saturday. And I had an older sister that she worked—she really kept us going, you know, after my brothers started working, she was the one that started going. Then we got kind of tired of it, and she got—you know, it was getting pretty hard there. And then when we lost that farm over there, why, she got a job at Fisher Body's down in Detroit, and I got married in '41 . . .

DC: Was that after you had lost that farm?

KN: After we moved on Schoenherr, yeah. Yeah. After we moved from there, the guy sold it. The only farm we moved, lost, was the one my Dad built on Leach Road. And my Dad was kind of careless—I mean, he—I can remember that he bought a piano. We lost that. He bought a car. We lost that. But it was—managed to keep our horses and he'd go to auction sales, Smart's Auction here in Rochester, and used to buy the animals there. And we used to have horses and mules, and when I was a kid there I can remember on Leach Road there on that farm there, we—they couldn't afford anything, but so we—to go skiing, there's a lot of hills there—why, we'd make skis out of barrels, and we'd take some inner tubes and cut them in half and pound the nails in there to keep our feet in there. But I mean, I am what I—it made me what I am today. And, oh my husband died twenty years ago, so I mean it—and just helped me with that, too.

- DC: Sure. What did your parents both do on the farm, you know, were they—it sounds like your siblings and you did an awful lot of the work . . .
- KN: Yeah, well they raised the truck gardening, and they raised cows. We sold milk. We had to get the milk and then a milk truck would come. We used to have to cool the milk and run it to a cooler, and the milk man would come with a great big truck there and we'd have them in cans, milk cans, and he would take them and that helped us with some of them. And then when I was a kid there, like I said, that they used to send me in two hours early to make something to eat. And we never had a washer. I mean, we—I used to have to wash the clothes, and what we had was a great big potbelly thing that we used to—my Dad used to boil water—we had pigs, and they'd kill the pigs and they'd get the hair off like that . . .
- DC: Sure, hog scalding, yeah.
- KN: Yeah, right, that's it! And then when we got electricity, the first thing we got was a washing machine and a radio. And I washed clothes for days. (laughs) Yeah.
- DC: Could you listen to the radio while you washed?
- KN: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.
- DC: Do you remember when that was?
- KN: Oh, gosh, no hon, I don't.
- DC: OK, sure.
- KN: But you know what, I've got so many memories of that farm that we lived on there. To this day, I can picture what we had there and—we had a tornado there one time. They called it a cyclone then, where now they call it a tornado. And my Mother and Dad, and we had a hired man, were holding the big doors on the barn, and my sister and I, and I had a little sister there, too. And we're holding the doors in our house there, and it was an older house, and my brother and our cousin were out watching the cows, and when that started coming, my mother hollered for them to come and they came in, hanging onto the cow's tail, that's how strong it was. Right, yeah. And—we lost a couple of buildings during that, and—so—used to have a—we never had a restroom, you know, a bathroom. We used to, you know, dig the hole. And when it got full we'd just move it further down and move the toilet over, over there, you know. And the only thing we had was our neighbors. We had farmers, and my mother and their mother, they were midwives for each other, because they didn't go to the hospital to have babies. [some kind of wild noise in the background] And I can remember my brother was born on Leach Road, and then my sister was born on the same place I was.
- DC: OK. How many years between you?

KN: Um—let's see—my sister's 75. I'm 79. She's four years younger than I am, so—and what they do is to drive into Rochester and get the doctor and bring him back there, and I remember that when she was born, why, my Dad—she was born breech birth, and so he had to go get the doctor, and the doctor come and—it was born. I didn't know, you know, nothing, you know, about what's what. But my Mother told me to get some scissors. And I thought she was gonna cut the baby. I knew there's a baby. But she was gonna cut the cord, is what it was. And at that time, you know, those doctors there, why, oh they probably had it there, but she—I know she just asked me to get it, and I was scared she was gonna harm the baby. But you know, and she gets up the next day and goes out there. She was, you know, she was rough, yes. She was—and she had all the kids at home, she never—she never went to the hospital. In fact, you know, she never would go to the hospital. She was sick, she cured herself. And when she died here, why, we didn't know whether she was having a heart attack or what. And she died—she died before they got to the hospital, but it just made me feel bad that she said she never wanted to go to the hospital, she never wanted to die in a hospital, and here she did. You know? And she was 88 years old. She was 88 years old when she died. And—but she was a hard worker. She lived with me for twenty nine and a half years, because my Dad, after we lived on Schoenherr there and things were—to go to the market in the truck and everything, my sister, she got tired of it so she went to work. So he went and worked. He went to Briggs to work. And so then my Dad went to Detroit. He lived there. And they were separated. They were never divorced, but they were separated. And my mother one time tried to go there, and live. She lived there for a week, but he—he played numbers a lot and she's just an old-fashioned woman and so anyway, she stayed there and my brothers had bought a house after they got out of the service, and she kept house for them, and then after awhile, well, they took and one got married and brought his wife in there, so she moved in with me. So she lived with me for twenty nine and a half years. Out of the seven kids, you know, she—and, of course she helped me when I had my kids. I had two kids and she watched them when I was able to go to work, too, so . . .

DC: So—wow, there's so much to follow up on there.

KN: I—I mentioned that—I'm sorry that I'm going back and forth, I think—when I think of something, I think I go back, you know maybe I'm just jumping all over.

DC: No, you're doing fine. You're doing just fine. No, no, there's just a lot to think about there. Did you like the farm?

KN: Well, no I didn't. No, I didn't. No I didn't, because, uh, it was, it was hard. And the only thing—we used to have our neighbors there. We used to go—we all got together, the younger people, we got together and we used to go to a park. They call it Warsaw Park. And that used to be—it's a Polish, Polish—they used to give Polish dances. And this is where I met my husband and different friends. The neighbors, you know, they took and met at their hus—wives and husbands there, too.

DC: Did you meet your husband there?

KN: Yes I did, yeah.

DC: How old were you when you met him?

KN: Um—I was 17. And I got married, well, out of—I got married, uh, let's see—I got married in September and I was 19. I was gonna be 19 in September when I got married.

DC: So what year was that then?

KN: '41. Isn't that terrible young? [more noises, perhaps a bird-themed clock]

DC: OK. So it sounds like a lot of you were ready to find other things to do besides farming.

KN: Oh yeah. Right, right, yeah. I mean we really—I mean, we worked hard. You have to—to have to hoe, and we used to have wheat, you know. We used to have to make this—stack wheat. And we used to have thrashers. And when the thrashers come, why, that's the only time we ever, [slight chuckle] we ever had real butter—otherwise we made our own butter, you know. And I can remember that, and we had better meat because we had to have pork chops for the guy, the farmers that helped, you know, too, at the thrashing there. And—because when we went to school, then went to school there, why, we had to take and walk—our school went down during that cyclone think. And we had to walk about, oh—about four and a half miles I believe it was that we had counted. It was four and a half miles that we had to walk to school. They—when they moved down, we went to a store—it used to be a store and then we had a school house out of it. And it was eight—eight grades in one school, you know.

DC: Were you able to go to school regularly?

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. So did you have many farm chores—I guess you'd have to milk cows to take care of in the winter, but . . .

KN: Yeah, oh yeah. But you know what? My mother did a lot of that. I was able to—when she filled a pail up, she could fill it up real quick, because she could really know how to pull on that. But I—would be my job to take and pour it in the can. And then I used to have to help them clean the horse barn, and the cows, too. The cow stuff there, you know, with a shovel, and—[pause] and take and make sure we didn't have any weeds and that in there. And, hey, we didn't—we went to the show maybe once a month or something. And my brothers were nice enough to take us, but he—like, he took all the neighbors. And that's when he was working, but he—I guess he must've been off work or something. But he'd take the truck and all. And there was about—oh, I think there was about eight of us from different—brothers and sisters of different farmers, you know, that lived by us there.

DC: He'd load you up and take you to the show.

KN: Yeah, yeah. And then, I remember when I was small—oh must've been about nine or ten years old, we used to have a neighbor, they were—we called them *rich*. And it was a mother and a son there, and he worked afternoons, so at night she was afraid to stay by herself. So I'd go over there and stay with her until he came home in the morning. And that's the first time I ever had canned stuff to eat, you know. And the only thing I remember about is canned peas. Canned peas. And she'd give me canned peas, because she knew that we never had anything. But I got a few dollars, and then I took and worked in—they called it Mallburn [sp?] Golf Course. And I was everything from a nurse maid to a bar maid there at that time. And then that's when I was able to catch the bus to go to high school, too. That's when I was able to catch the bus to go to high school, because it went by there. And they had three children and I'd make sure that they—I made their lunches, and had they had their breakfast, and they were both teachers. So they took the kids to school, and I run down to the corner, probably half a mile, to catch the bus to go to school.

DC: OK. So that's what you did do, work your way through high school.

KN: Yeah. And I—I got a dollar—for working there, I got a dollar a day and I worked, and they used to give hay rides. I got a dollar and a quarter. And this money I had to—that I saved, and I was able to save it for when I got married, so.

DC: Well this would have been during the Depression.

KN: Yes, it was. Yes it was, hon, yeah.

DC: So, I mean, it would've been pretty hard to make ends meet.

KN: Right. I think, and then I'd tell my kids, you know, I worked for a dollar a day, and a dollar and a quarter for hay rides. And then I said I was everything from cooking and serving buffet to being a bar maid. And, God, nowadays they would've got in trouble. But, that's the way it was those days.

DC: Well it sounds like your family at least would've had enough to eat during the Depression.

KN: Well, we had the pigs, you know. And—so this is what we—we never had—we had the cows and we had cats, but my Dad would take them to the auction sale, and this is how we got, was able to get money to keep our machinery going. And to buy the horses with. So—and we never had electricity, didn't—after awhile we got electricity. This is, like I said, when we got electricity in there, my goodness sakes. That was really something.

DC: Yeah, that's—I've used an old 1920's vintage electric washing machine. I thought that was rough, but I've never had to use a boiling pot.

- KN: Yeah, we had to—I remember when I used to have to boil that water in that pot, and I had to wash it out real good because my Dad used to put the pigs in there, and I get all that hair off and everything, and—I used to have to scrub it real good and clean it up and then put water in there and then have to heat it. And then, we had a stove, too, that had—my Mother had a great big copper pot that we used to warm water on there to wash clothes with, too. And then we had this here, the wash machine, but it didn't have a wringer on it. It was separate. But hey, I'll tell you what, it was so good to, not to have to go scrubbing.
- DC: I'll bet. So anyways, it sounds like your brothers, then, went into the service then during the war, is that right?
- KN: Yeah, two brothers, yes. Two brothers.
- DC: Two brothers went in the service. And then, how about your husband, what did he do? At the time you met him, what was he doing?
- KN: He worked at Dodge Main. And he wasn't in the service. He had a broken eardrum, so he never got to go in the service.
- DC: OK. So he worked at Dodge Main. Did he live up here and work at Dodge Main?
- KN: Well, then he lived—he lived on 24 Mile Road, we lived on Schoenherr. So he lived about—oh, about a mile and a half away from me, two miles from me there.
- DC: OK. And he commuted down to Hamtramck.
- KN: And he used to drive to Hamtramck, yeah. They had a car then, yeah.
- DC: Wow, OK. Yeah. So let's see, you got married then in 1941, and is that about the time that you got the pottery job then?
- KN: Yeah, let me see the pottery—yes, I—I was working in the pottery. I got a job in the pottery . . .
- DC: Around the time you got married, or before?
- KN: Yeah, because I used to—let's see—how in the heck was it? I worked there—didn't say what year, though. When I got married, I went to work in the pottery.
- DC: OK. And what exactly did you do there?
- KN: Used to make the dishes—used to clean the dishes. We used to have a—a tool they used to clean the edges so make it smooth all the way around there. And that was piecework there. But you know what, I can't remember how much I made there. I didn't—couldn't very

much because I remember—because I know when I went to Pontiac Motors, you know how much I made when I started at Pontiac Motors?

DC: No.

KN: Eighty-four cents. [pause] Eighty-four cents. [papers shuffling] This is when I got . . .

DC: Oh, there you are. OK. Oh, OK, this is your whole record, then.

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: I'd love to make a copy of this sometime, if I could. Yeah, oh boy, it shows the . . .

KN: I could send you—I could make some and send it to you.

DC: That'd be great, yeah. And you have some . . .

KN: I have, um . . .

DC: . . . leaves over here.

KN: Um, this is—this is, they had to write some on here. I can't—some of them that they—oh yeah, OK, this it says, "[?] Department". This is why they—see, and they start with this local wage agreement: general increase needed, and sick leave, and then reduction of force and merits and . . .

DC: Well did you like the pottery job?

KN: Huh?

DC: Did you like the pottery job?

KN: Yes, yes I did. Yes I did. And then I thought, well I had to go—wasn't making enough money to—to do anything, and then I had my—worked at pottery. I had my daughter. And after my daughter, why, I thought well I'm gonna—I needed a—go in a factory. I needed a washer and a—what did I say?—oh, I needed a washer. We never had a dryer, I had a washer. And I worked—forty-three years later, I'm still working there. I don't know how many washers I got!

DC: Well let's see. You had the—let me back up here a second. So you had a daughter, you said?

KN: I have a daughter.

DC: And you had her while you were working at the pottery.

KN: Uh, I had her—um—that's just when I quit the pottery.

DC: Oh OK, that's when you quit the pottery.

KN: Yes.

DC: And so at that point, did you go over to Fisher Body's briefly? Was that what you did?

KN: Then I had—I stayed home with her for two years.

DC: Oh, for two years, OK. All right.

KN: Then I went to Fisher Body's. And, because we bought a—I was renting—we were renting at the time, so we wanted to find a—buy a house. So, I thought well I was gonna have to go to get some furniture for that house. And, so that's when I started, went to Fisher Body's.

DC: OK, and your daughter would have been, what, two years old at that point?

KN: Right, right, she was two years old when she [meaning herself] went to work. And then I went and worked . . .

DC: And so when did you start at Fisher Body, you said? Fisher Body.

KN: Um, it had to be the first of the year—the first of—let's see.

DC: About early 1945?

KN: Yeah. I worked there for a couple months and then I got laid off.

DC: OK. Let's see—OK, so your daughter was a couple years old, you decided that you were trying to save to buy a house and . . .

KN: Well, we had—we bought this house, yeah. Our payments were forty dollars a month, and you know, and my husband was working at Dodge Main, but he was laid off, off and on, you know, so—and it was even hard to make that forty dollars a month payment. Isn't that terrible?

DC: So he was being laid off, say, in 1944, 1945, laid off and on?

KN: Off and on, right. Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. Wow. So, it sounds like the war economy was cooling off, you know, before the war was over here.

KN: Right.

DC: OK, so—so his work was intermittent, so you had to get a job. So you went to Fisher Body.

KN: Right, yeah.

DC: What did you work out for child care for your daughter?

KN: My Mother. My Mother—she was living in that house there that my brothers had bought, oh, probably about, I'd say half a mile away from me there. And she took care of—I took the girl over there. Then I started working in the—at Pontiac Motors there, and then four years later—oh, let's see, when was J.R. born in? Oh God, isn't that terrible when I— [shuffling papers]. I had him when I worked in the foundry, and in the core room or wherever. Oh, that's the foundry—they call that the foundry. [more papers shuffling]

DC: What did you do at Fisher Body in the few months you were there?

KN: Um—I was burring.

DC: Burring. OK, what's burring?

KN: Burring is like—just the parts of the—parts of the engine, they'd have a—a thing sticking out the end and you used to have to burr to make it smooth.

DC: Oh, OK.

KN: It was on a stone. A stone—you'd used to have to just go *bzzzzz*, you know, and take the burr off of that part of—whatever part it was of the car.

DC: Did you—how did you learn how to do that?

KN: Well they showed me.

DC: They showed you. OK, all right.

KN: Oh yeah. Yeah, they showed me how to do it.

DC: I'll let you find what you're looking for.

KN: No, I was gonna get my pencil here.

DC: Oh, OK. Was it hard to learn how to do?

KN: No, no. It wasn't.

DC: Were there many other women working in that department?

KN: Yes there—oh, yes, there was a lot of women. And then, like when I got through—I got laid off and I went to Pontiac Motors, you know. Um—this is a—men used to come there and get a job. They'd only work a couple days, and they'd quit because, you know, in the foundry it was terrible. It was terrible, the core room there. And the smoke and the smell and—you'd go downtown to Pontiac, you could smell—the smell was on you, you could smell who—you could tell a person that worked in the foundry, just by, you know, by the smell. But the guys, they wouldn't work there. They was able to get jobs someplace else.

DC: Oh, so they moved on out.

KN: Yeah. Oh, they didn't want the foundry at all, yeah.

DC: OK. So let's see. When you were laid off at Fisher Body, was there any indication that you'd ever be rehired there?

KN: I didn't—I didn't know what it was and they said I was laid off, so I went on and I never did go back.

DC: You never went back to find out . . .

KN: And I don't remember whether they ever called me back or not.

DC: OK. All right.

KN: See I don't remember that. So, I was working—I knew that I would, you know, wouldn't stop.

DC: Yeah. So how about in the foundry at Pontiac Motor? Tell me who all worked in the foundry when you were there. How many people were there, and what kinds of people.

KN: Oh, there's a lot of people there. And there's mostly—there was a lot of colored people, and I was scared, you know. I never was around colored people. But there was— [thoughtful pause] well, [in a flat affect] they were all right. You just had to show them that you weren't scared, that's all—you know, some of them. But I learned a lot. I mean, I really learned and hey, they're my best friends after I learned their ways and I could understand their ways, too. But gosh, don't put that in there, because there's a lot of black people—in the foundry there, I mean, the union thing there. When I worked in—worked in [Plant] 18 I had—went from Plant 9, I went over to 18, and I had a committee man that was a colored guy, and he was really good. I mean, he—and, but you know, there's all kinds. When I was in there, this one colored guy he says to me, he says, "Katie," he said, "you're gonna go along further than I will, just by the color of your skin." And I'll never

forget that. And I told him, I said, “Alex, you know, that’s the poorest excuse. You’re just damn lazy.” I said, “Where did I get ahead here? I’m working right here with you.” I said, “I’m a little faster than you in doing stuff,” but I said that that’s a poor excuse. And the other day I took and read where he took and died. But I always remembered that there, of him saying that there. And he was a real nice guy, too, you know. When he said that, it made me mad.

DC: OK. So you think that he could have moved on if he wanted to? Is that what you’re saying?

KN: Yeah, well he was lazy, and some of them took advantage of our boss. The boss was real easy going. But—they didn’t pay any attention to him. I mean, he had to do what he had to do, you know. They made him do it, he couldn’t—I didn’t get no easier job. But I was just faster than him in doing things.

DC: So tell me exactly what the work was that you did in the foundry.

KN: Oh, in the foundry?

DC: Yeah.

KN: In the core room, then I worked in that uh, like I told you, I . . .

DC: Dealing with those spills—cleaning up those overflows.

KN: Yeah, and then used to make the blocks, the blocks for the engines, you know. And used to have what they used to call a slinger, and you used to have to—they’d pour sand over in top there, and many times you had to be careful because it’d go around and these guys on top would fill these here, fill these here things with sand, and me and another person, we’d change—al these different jobs, you know, we’d go around and change so it wouldn’t be the same, but we used to have to go like this to fill these things full of sand. And then—and they just go on, it’d be a different operation and another operation, and at the end there it’d be real hard. And then when they’d take these here molds, as they call them, they’d put them in the oven, and then from the oven, why, they were hard, and they took them to the foundry and they put them in these here great big casts. And then we used to clamp them together. There’s a top and a bottom of this here part—motor—part. And that’s why we had to take and clamp, to keep it together and this and they poured and that made one great big thing.

DC: So they’d pour the metal in there . . .

KN: Right, yeah.

DC: So it sounds like if you had that big oven there, it would’ve been hot.

KN: Well it was hot. I mean, when we—we was always glad because we'd move from—tis one did so much of it and then we'd take and move, and then we'd take and move, you know. So we weren't doing the same thing over and over again. But that was—moving that there back and forth, that sand with that there, when they did them parts, they didn't hit it just right, you know hey, we'd get sand all over, and . . .

DC: How far down was it coming?

KN: Oh, well, where they carried the sand—it was way up in the air, because we had these here, they call them the slingers in the machines. It'd probably be over the roof there, and they'd pour down. It would be way up there, but those things that came down that we called the slingers that—It come down this here like a pipe, like, and we used to have to move it back and forth to—and this way and this way. And—so, that's what it was.

DC: Were there many other women working here?

KN: Yes, there was a lot of women, hon, a lot of women. There's a lot of women who worked there, yeah.

DC: It just seems odd to me in a way because, you know, we always learn that they tried to put women in jobs that weren't quite as heavy, you know. It just sounds like heavy, hard work.

KN: Well, it was. I mean at first you did. I mean—then later on in the foundry there, why, what I was told is that I never complained and I did my work and everything, so I was offered a job. The foreman thought—I guess he liked that I never complained like a lot of people did, you know. And I got a job taking—writing down scrap. Go around to different departments writing down scrap.

DC: When was that now?

KN: That was after that there—oh, I worked there eleven years in foundry.

DC: Eleven years in the foundry and then you got the job in the scrap. OK.

KN: Yeah. That was the last job I had there, was checking scrap.

DC: Did you like the job in the foundry?

KN: Huh? [not enthusiastically] Well, it—it was, like I said, it made me what I am. I mean, it was—it was dirty and everything but we used to have—oh, I forgot to tell you. We worked in there, started working there, we used to have to wear uniforms. And a hat. And you couldn't work if you didn't have that on there.

DC: What kind of hat was it?

- KN: It was—I don't think I've got pictures of the hat here or not. I believe I might have some. And we had to have a—I used to be, when I got in 18—now I'm going way ahead—in 18 they had me in charge. If people retired, I'd go around, take up a collection, and get the cake and the coffee and everything ready, and these are the different people that retired—retired from Pontiac Motors. And this was over in 18 when I was over in 18. I was in charge of this here committee here. Let me see. [pages shuffling] That's the United Way. I was on quite a few things. It made me feel good. There's my cat I found in Pontiac Motors. Do you remember [stock car racer] Richard Petty? That's an autograph of him. He was down there. These are pictures. I used to be a reporter, too, when I was in the foundry. [laughs] There I am.
- DC: Oh, there you are. Yeah, sure. OK.
- KN: I got a picture someplace where I started—then we had a bowling team.
- DC: Oh, did you?
- KN: Did you take a look at that picture there? You know you have to laugh, those ridiculous pin curls.
- DC: Yeah, look at those. Wow.
- KN: See, I was Kardys at that time. Then I got divorced and I was married, quite a few years later, then I got to be Neumann. But here I'm Katie Kardys, at that time.
- DC: So this is your first husband, the husband you met at the Warsaw Park?
- KN: Yeah. Yeah, there it is.
- DC: OK. So, we'll sneak up on that as well.
- KN: Well see here's this here guy that I was telling you about that—he's the colored guy, and he was—he was a committee man in 18. We used to have a newspaper and I used to—well this is the newspaper we used to write for. [shuffling pages] And I got, I mean, some old pictures of—oh, we had a baseball team when I worked in Plant 9. Let's see—that's one of the teams—where the heck, where's my team? Oh, I think—you know what I did? Oh, son of a gun!
- DC: You pulled yours out?
- KN: I gave it to my granddaughter. She collects old stuff.

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

- KN: . . . we had a lot of bowling teams. And I had some—some of the pictures over here. [shuffling papers] See these are really—see how old some of these here are?
- DC: Sure.
- KN: Old cars.
- DC: You're good at saving these things.
- KN: Well, you know, I don't—and then, yet, I was sorry that I did because I had to cut out some pictures, too. We had a thing going on—they wanted me to cut some pictures. They knew I had all these here. Then I was kind of sorry for cutting them all out. And that was no good, either. This was one—[laughs] look at . . .
- DC: Let's see.
- KN: That was one of our—our seventy-fifth anniversary. And this is that girl that I had the picture of.
- DC: Oh OK, yeah. The Firebird girl.
- KN: Here's my twenty-five year—twenty-five year, uh, when I worked there. This is, this is what we got for twenty-five years.
- DC: OK. Oh, you got a watch.
- KN: We got a watch. Yeah. We opened the store and I tried to have the store in Plant 18.
- DC: Yeah, there you are.
- KN: There I am in United Way. I was on that for quite a few years. And these her—I'd cut off the different ones that I worked with, in Plant 18.
- DC: The store, OK, I see.
- KN: That one's 1984 now. This was a group of us from a—we used to have a—I was on the picnic committee that they used to give every year, and this was one of them. And this is one of the plants with all the group that were in the—people that were on the committee there. OK, here's Virginia Grant.
- DC: Oh, there she is, OK.

- KN: Yeah that's her. See, and there's Leon again.
- DC: Uh-huh. All right. I'll have to get back in touch with her.
- KN: This is another one in '85, of another group there. I was on there for quite a few years. And this is, this is our store here.
- DC: What kinds of things did you sell in the store?
- KN: Uh—different things, like pens and T-shirts and—what do you call—mem—membra—I can't pronounce it. Membrabral—M-E-M . . .
- DC: Memorabilia.
- KN: That's it, that's it.
- DC: I gotcha, OK. So did you ever get your washing machine?
- KN: Yes, I got my washing machine. In fact, like I said, I got quite a few of them.
- DC: So you were in the foundry for eleven years. Did you ever try to get out of the foundry in those eleven years?
- KN: No I didn't. You know what, I didn't and when they were—I had a chance to go to the—they needed some people in the gun plant. And this is how I got to go in there. And they wanted to put me right in the foundry. From the core room, they wanted to keep me in the foundry where they pour the iron and that. And I had a committee man—he was a black committee man, too, and he didn't want women to work in the foundry there. So he was able to get me over to Plant—Plant 9—no, Plant 18. Got me moved from there.
- DC: And when was that?
- KN: In—gosh, I don't know, hon.
- DC: OK.
- KN: Well, it would have to be, if I worked there eleven years . . .
- DC: So it was after the 11 years?
- KN: Yeah, yeah.
- DC: OK, all right. So '56 or so.
- KN: Right, right.

- DC: OK. So it wasn't until then that you got moved out, and that was when you went to Plant 18. But did you . . .
- KN: Oh, Plant—oh wait, excuse me hon. I went to Plant 9 first, then I went—from 9 I went to 18.
- DC: OK. We'll get it. When the war was over, you would've been in the foundry.
- KN: That's when I—OK, I went from the foundry, I went through the war to the Plant 15. And I worked there—I got it on here when I—I believe it's in here. And then from there I went to Plant 9. From 9 I went to 18. That's how it was.
- DC: But there was some time in between there, yeah.
- KN: Yeah, right, right.
- DC: But the gun plant was Plant 15.
- KN: It was Plant 15, yes.
- DC: OK. And then—was that while the war was still on?
- KN: Yeah, we were making . . .
- DC: Making guns for the war?
- KN: Right.
- DC: OK. And then did you go back to the foundry after that?
- KN: No, I went back to Plant 9.
- DC: Plant 9.
- KN: Yeah.
- DC: Now I'm confused. Let's see . . .
- KN: From the foundry—from the foundry I went to—I went to the gun plant. OK. They needed people in the gun plant. They were—and they didn't want me to work in the foundry part of the—pouring that there. Because there's a core room, there was a wire room, there were so many different parts in the foundry that they call it, but everything was called the foundry because it was in there.

- DC: OK. But there were a lot of different jobs in the foundry.
- KN: Right. The wire room, they had the pattern shop, they had a cleaning room, and—so he was able to get me over to the—they needed some good workers, he said, over in the gun plant. [shuffling papers] I got it on here. My boss got these all together and they stapled them. I never did take and really—I should, right here. Yeah, in '56 see, that was the gun plant.
- DC: '56 is when you went to the gun plant?
- KN: Well, let's see. Eleven years—'45—oh, wait. '45—it was '56.
- DC: Yup, OK. All right, so that's when you went to the gun plant.
- KN: Yeah. Then when the gun plant was done in the gun plant, I went to Plant 9. And then from 9 I went over to 18, Because they moved—I was working on camshafts, and they moved the camshaft department over to Plant 18.
- DC: OK, so when they moved that production, you moved with it.
- KN: Right, right.
- DC: OK. Well so it sounds like you were in the foundry for a good long time, then. What, '45 to '56.
- KN: Yeah. Yes, I was. Eleven years.
- DC: Can you remember any changes in the foundry during those years? You know, first of all, in what you did?
- KN: No, it was all, all the same.
- DC: Same work, OK.
- KN: I don't know what the changes would be. Like I said, the core room was always, well you know, a lot of sand. There was always sand there. And they used to take and loan us—if they needed somebody, they'd loan people out to different departments. But mostly I was in the core room.
- DC: Did you ever go out to different departments then?
- KN: Oh, like I used to go out—they used to have a cleaning room. And that'd be the same thing. I'd have to watch—excuse me—to see whether there were any burrs—burrs on these here blocks, in different parts of the motor. And I worked in—in Plant 9 there, and I worked on rod department for a long time, too.

DC: What was that department about?

KN: Rods. They made connecting rods.

DC: Connecting rods, OK.

KN: Yeah. And then from the rod job I went into the camshafts. They thought I was a—and then the camshaft department moved over to 18. This is when I went with it.

DC: You said that when you started in the foundry, there were a lot of black workers and a lot of women workers. Did the makeup of the workers change at all after the war?

KN: Did the what?

DC: Were there still as many workers and as many blacks working in there?

KN: Oh yes, yes there was. But it seemed like there was more in the foundry than there was in the other places, and . . .

DC: The blacks, or women, or both?

KN: Um, both.

DC: Both, OK. All right. Hm. OK, more in there than any other place. OK.

KN: And when I was in—when I was over in Plant 9 they used to have, you know—I don't know what they'd call it—they used to have the colored people where they had to—I don't remember any white people, but most days—remember they were black in our department. And they used to have a man come from some—someplace that—to see how these people were working, how they did their jobs and that. And they'd take and ask different people that worked in that department if they did their job or did they goof off or what, you know. And—but I can't remember what they called them, that they—why, they—this was somebody that they had that they got the jobs through this here—what would you call it? Through, like a—it wasn't a welfare, but it was some kind of a thing they had where they got jobs for people. Yeah. And I know that in Plant 9—no, it was 18, there was a lot of people they hired from Plant 18—they hired a lot of people from down South. And they used to tell me how they'd come on a bus and this and that, you know. But . . .

DC: And that would've been in the later 1950's.

KN: Right, right. And I was—yeah.

DC: Can you tell me more about how you all got along in the foundry room? You said that you

had never seen black people much before at all.

KN: No, and I was scared. I don't know why I was so scared of them. But they were great, they were—well there was—some would talk rough and I was scared. I'd never been—I had never been around. Hey, I was just like on a farm there, and then when I took and got married, well I worked in a pottery there. And there was—there's no black people there in the pottery, not in this pottery. And I just, just was scared, that was all. But, hey, I got to—they got to be some of the best friends that I ever had. I mean, they stuck up for you.

DC: Were there any black women in there?

KN: Oh yes. There was a lot of black women. Yeah.

DC: A lot of black women, OK. Let's see—were you aware of the union at all at that point in time, when you first started?

KN: Oh yes, yeah. Yeah yeah. Yeah, we had . . .

DC: How so?

KN: I worked there—let's see . . .

DC: Think about when you worked in the foundry.

KN: Let's see, how long did I work in the foundry . . .

DC: Eleven years, you said.

KN: Then they went on—yeah, but meanwhile we had gone on—they had gone on a strike. And I think I was off for sixty days on a strike. And we used to have to walk—do—walk the street, you know.

DC: Right, the picket line.

KN: Picket line, that's it. And then after awhile, I was—I was in two I know of, maybe three strikes. Then they put me in—they put me in where I was—I made out checks. We got \$5.00—people got \$5.00 but they had to work the picket line to get this money, and I used to make the checks out. I was one of—not the only one, I mean, there's different ones.

DC: OK. Do you remember which strike that was?

KN: Um—that was when there was sixty days that—that was a long one, yes. And then the next strike, why, then they—I took and worked in the office where the national—the guy right from—the guy from the union, Detroit, representative was there. And people, they—they were supposed to take and sign up to take and picket, and if you weren't there, you

didn't take and sign up, well he'd want to know why you weren't there. And a lot of people didn't get them because they'd say, "Well I went up north or that instead of picketing," see. But he had a black—he had a black guard. And—but the colored people really let him have it. He was a white guy. But he had a black guard. But when the colored people would say, well, give them what excuse there, they'd really shout at them. But you know, nine times out of ten he'd let them have them. That's one of the things I remember, but I don't want to put that in there, because I don't want them to think that I'm, you know, I was against them, because I have a lot of black friends.

DC: Well it sounds like what you were saying is that some people didn't do the picket line work . . .

KN: Yeah, yeah. But that there, it was . . .

DC: Let's see. So, do you remember what the issues were in any of those strikes? What issues were at stake?

KN: Uh—was for more money. It was for more money and more benefits, is what they call them. Yeah.

DC: OK. Those were the issues. How about inside the foundry—did you ever have any issues with the work itself? Did you ever have to call your committeemen or anything?

KN: No, like I said, you know all the years I worked there I maybe called him two or three times. And it was nothing really major. But I was able to—what I had—if I had a problem, I was able to talk it out with the boss and see what was what and it worked out that way. But there, like I said, the two or three times that they tried to blame me for something, well this is when I call the committeeman, you know, and say that I wasn't—I always proved that I wasn't.

DC: Do you remember what specifically they blamed you for?

KN: Yeah. I—this here one was that—it was in Plant 9 and I was inspector.

DC: So this is long after the foundry then.

KN: Yeah. And I worked in Plant 9 there, and I had knocked some—some—red-tagged some stuff that this guy—that was loaned to that department. And I put a red tag on it, and the foreman, that production guy, took and gave him a bawling out about them. And this here guy, like I said, he happened to be black. And he used that word to me that I won't stand for. And this is when I told the—I told my foreman that I wasn't gonna take that. And he says, "Well that was shop talk." And I said, "Well, as far as I'm concerned, that is not shop talk." I said, "I don't even—my husband don't even use that." And this is when I called the committee man and got it straightened out. And they just never brought that guy back there to fill in for somebody, you know.

DC: So he was just there for temporary filling in.

KN: Right, right. He was—yeah, because they had a lot of people that were missing, and they'd have to borrow help from another one. But I knocked down that basket of his stuff. And I took and showed it to him.

DC: And he felt that it should be passed?

KN: Well, he was mad that I caught it, see?

DC: Yeah. All right, OK.

KN: But I was an inspector. If I didn't get it, I'd catch heck. So that was the only time that—and another time was—was over in 18. Something—oh, but I don't—but I don't know, it was against a foreman, though. This was against a foreman.

DC: What was it about?

KN: Well, like I said, I was an inspector over there and there was a couple baskets, and whenever I used to take and check stuff, you know, and I'd red tag it—I would take a piece of chalk and on the bottom of that big basket, I would initial what was wrong with it. Well, one morning I come over there, and here is—my boss called me over there and he says, “Katie, these are red tagged and there's nothing—what it says on there is nothing wrong.” And he had the gauges. So I took and went—not say nothing to him—I went around, walked around the basket there. And I looked down to see what it was that I had initialed what was wrong with it. And I went and got the gauge, and I didn't go to the first layer. I went to the second layer, see, and this is what they done.

DC: Ahh, OK, so they had hid the bad ones under some good ones?

KN: Right, right.

DC: OK. Was that common?

KN: Huh? Oh, well, it got caught—I mean if they—that was—I don't know if any other people did or not. But they'd try to pull that because the foreman, you know, the production foreman, he don't like that because that's a bad mark against him. But hey, if I didn't catch it, I'd be at fault, too.

DC: Sure, yeah. Getting back to the foundry for a second, I still have a few more questions about that. Were there white men in the foundry as well?

KN: Yeah, yeah. But not very many, you know. They—they'd work not even a day and they'd quit.

DC: They were the ones who would quit.

KN: Yeah.

DC: OK.

KN: Yeah, yeah. They wouldn't work. And I used to tell them when I was in there quite a few years, like even—especially—well, 9 and 18, I'd tell them, I said, "Everybody should take and work in the foundry. They'd appreciate their job now."

DC: Yeah. What did you like best about the foundry?

KN: Uh—it made me strong. It made me strong. Really. And—every plant that I worked in was interesting. I knew more about cars and I really felt proud that I could say, hey, what kind of a Pontiac that is, or that car, you know? And uh . . .

DC: Had you paid much attention to cars before you had the job there?

KN: No, no I didn't. But you know, it made me feel good, because I could tell what the difference was, and knew what kind it was. And the first car we ever bought there was a—what the heck was it? It was a Pontiac. Isn't that terrible, I can't remember what it was! [pause] And uh—but it just made me feel good that I could name a Sunbird from a—from a—isn't that—hey, I've been gone for fifteen years!

DC: That's OK. But you could tell one model from another, anyway.

KN: But if I looked in there I could tell them again. Now I just don't—I don't even know whether it's a new car or not, you know, this year's or last year's or what.

DC: So you don't pay as much attention now that you're out of there.

KN: No, no. I—my husband, he had a car and I've got it, it's a '81 car. And it's got [cancer?] over it, and it's—I don't take and drive it because I'm scared, you know. But I don't want to lease one, because they got a thirty-six months. And I said, when I'm going to be 80, I was gonna quit driving. [laughs] I've seen so many people drive around there and I said I don't wanna drive like they do. Well, hey, this is--make sure I'll be 80. So I don't wanna get another car.

DC: I can see that.

KN: And that's why I didn't—it's—the muffler's going on it, and that's why I didn't want to meet you and I thought, well I had that stuff here.

DC: The stuff's all here. That makes perfect sense, yeah. So what was the worst part about the

foundry job?

KN: Uh—the smell. The smell. But you know what, I had—for dirty as it was, and the smell, when I went to Plant—I went to Plant 8—when I was in 18, I had the worst complexion. I had a better complexion in the foundry than I did over there, even with all that dirt. Yup. But it was just the smell on your clothes. You couldn't get rid of that smell, no matter how you washed it. We had those uniforms—oh, I was gonna see . . .

DC: Well, we'll find it eventually.

KN: The uniforms.

DC: With the hat.

KN: If I come across one, I will—if you want these here, I'll Xerox them.

DC: Oh that would be great if you could.

KN: And I will send them to you. And if I—I will look for—look for pictures of uniforms. In fact, you know what, I had one and—and the hat, we used to have to wear these hats. And we used to have to wear them a certain length. And you couldn't—you couldn't wear anything—you had to have your hair covered. Yeah. You had to have your hair covered. But those uniforms—but they furnished the uniforms for you.

DC: Did they wash them for you, too?

KN: Oh, no.

DC: No, you had to take them home and wash them.

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. Yeah. Did you ever feel any pressure to leave work at that point? I guess your Mom was taking care of the kids.

KN: Well, yeah—well I was—well, yeah. I didn't. It—sometimes you know, like, I can remember that—like when they had, like a vacation—I never knew what it was to have a vacation till I got to be friends with a woman when I worked in Plant 9. And she talked me into—into—no, it wasn't Plant 9—yes it would be Plant 9. And she talked me into going to a—for to take a vacation. I never took a vacation. I never took a vacation.

DC: You hadn't taken one.

KN: No. Because you know, it was, like I say, my husband was working all the time and to make those *forty dollar payments*, I just, I mean, I just couldn't get—you know. And

paying for a car . . .

DC: So was your husband still working at Dodge Main all this time?

KN: Off and on, yes.

DC: Off and on.

KN: Off and on, yeah. Then he had to—he helped his folks, too. In fact, his Mother even worked at Dodge Main, and they lived on the farm where—well, where he lived when I met him, you know. And she worked there for awhile, then they took and moved to Texas to be with another son. So . . .

DC: OK.

KN: Well they got to be in poor health there, so they took and sold that and moved to Texas.

DC: OK. So what shifts did he work and what shift did you work?

KN: We both worked days.

DC: Oh, OK.

KN: And then that one time, I worked afternoons, when I worked on the slingers there. And that was rough. I didn't like the afternoon shift.

DC: Why is that?

KN: Because—to getting a ride—I would have to find a ride—I had to find a ride to go to work because we couldn't afford a car, you know. And I had to hitch a ride with people that lived out that way, you know, lived out Utica there. Because I used to live on Dequindre. And I was able to—well, you know, word got around that so and so needs a ride and a lot of people was, you know, were driving. And that one—there was six people in one car there. We'd take a van, but you know it was to get a ride.

DC: Yeah. So was it hard to organize a ride?

KN: Well, once you got it, I mean, the guy was steady working, so that was—we were lucky there.

DC: Yeah, yeah. Now did you own your home at that point?

KN: We were buying it, yes.

DC: You were in the process of buying it, yeah. OK.

KN: In fact, this one—one of the guys that I was able to get a ride with, he was a foreman there. No—was he? He worked—I can't remember whether he was a foreman then or not. But later on, when I got to be in inspection, my God, here he is my boss. Walt Spencer.

DC: [to the dog] How're you doing?

KN: Did you get your nap?

DC: Refreshed and ready to go. Let's see. So, it sounds like when you were in the foundry, at least, you didn't have much use—I mean, you didn't have much need to use the union or the committee man or anything like that.

KN: No, because I was—I done my job there, but there's . . .

DC: Did others around you have to use the committee man?

KN: Oh, different ones, oh yes. Yes they did. And I'd learn. I guess I was just—I think I was afraid of my job—I needed a good job and I wasn't afraid of work. And—but I can remember them calling committeemen, because I used to have to take and relieve a person that would do their job. I got to know—like I said, I worked in every department in there, and I—you know, you got to know the jobs. So—but, hey, like I told people, I said, "Everybody should work in the foundry. They'd appreciate their jobs." Especially in the foundry part there, where you used to have to pour that iron there. And in fact one time, there, why, they used to have different machines there. And that one machine there they used to have, it used to close together—they used to pour—they used to make the great big box. I can't even remember what the heck it was. But some guy, repairman, was working on it and—carelessness, somebody pushed a button, and the guy got smashed in it. And that was it.

DC: Were you there that day?

KN: I was there that day, but I wouldn't go to see it. [sound of door closing] That's my son.

DC: Oh, hi.

KN: J.R., this is Dan. Dan, this is J.R. What year were you born J.R.?

JR: '47, Mom.

KN: '47.

DC: There we go.

KN: [addressing J.R.] Nancy was born in '43, right?

JR: What year were you born? 9/22/22.

KN: Yeah, that's an easy one to remember.

DC: All right. Let's see. I'm trying to remember—I still have more questions I could ask about the foundry, but I'm wondering if I should move along into some of the other things.

KN: It's up to you.

DC: Yeah—when you were in the foundry, you said you did a lot of different things depending on . . .

KN: Every depart—I worked in every department in there, except the wire room. I never worked in the wire room, and I don't know why I never did. But they used to have the core room. Of course the pattern shop was a men's shop. You know, I worked in the cleaning room, I worked in the—in all different core rooms there.

DC: I was wondering . . .

KN: And then I was on—I took scrap—quality control, they call that. I think that's what they named it in here.

DC: Oh, that's right, you've got all those listed down there.

KN: Yeah, they had them.

DC: I was wondering, you know, how you . . .

KN: Oh, production recorder. That's what they called it.

DC: Production recorder? OK.

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: That's a fancy title.

KN: Yes, it is. [laughs]

DC: I was wondering how they measured, or how they calculated your pay, if you got paid by the hour or by the piece, or just how that worked out.

KN: I worked hourly all the time.

DC: Hourly all the time.

KN: On everything. Yes, all the time. But when I worked at Mt. Clemens pottery, I worked by the piece.

DC: OK, at that point.

KN: Yeah. Over here, it was all by the hour.

DC: Yeah, the pottery by the piece. Did you ever have your job studied or anything like that?

KN: Oh yeah, time study. Oh yes, yes. Yes.

DC: OK. Tell me about that.

KN: Well that was something—that was kind of a—you had to make sure that—because sometimes I could work faster or another person could work faster than the other person, and then they would get mad that, you know, you're supposed to take your time. But it come out to be pretty good, you know. I mean, the guy was pretty good. Because he knew—after awhile when he's checking the jobs, he knew just how they worked, you know. So he was a good time study guy. That's one thing I can say.

DC: Did you see the same guy over and over?

KN: Huh?

DC: For time studies, was it the same person?

KN: Yes, yes it was.

DC: Oh, OK.

KN: Yeah, yeah. In fact, [laughs] I got to be pretty good buddies. We talked about old times, you know.

DC: Oh really?

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Is he still around, or don't you know?

KN: No, he died.

DC: He died, OK.

KN: He died, yeah.

DC: So how did you behave, then, when you were being studied?

KN: Very nervous. I was very nervous. And I'd try to slow down, and yet I'm not a slow person, you know, I'm always . . .

DC: It was hard to slow down.

KN: It was hard to slow down, but I did it, you know. And they did it for a couple hours, and then that was all. And just those couple hours, it was hard to slow down, you know, because you're so used to working, because you wanted to get done, you know. We had to get so many done, and—we had a production to do.

DC: OK, so you're paid by the hour, but you had a certain production goal as well.

KN: Right, right, right. Yes.

DC: What would happen if you didn't hit your production goal?

KN: Oh, we'd get bawling out. A bawling out. And lots of times the people would—they'd think they were smart. They'd take and break the machine so they wouldn't have to do it, you know, to get away from it. Because they couldn't do it. And that—that bothered me. That bothered me that they'd take and break it down so that they wouldn't—because it wasn't that—of course, to me it wasn't that hard. I wasn't the only one that, you know, I mean there were a lot of people that worked just like I did, too.

DC: How often would they break the machines?

KN: It depends how they felt. It depends how they felt.

DC: Was it hard to break a machine? [wild noises in the background again]

KN: Oh, no, no. No, they'd stick something in there and they—of course, you know, a lot of foundry workers—they were smart. You know, they worked on there long enough in that department; they knew what was what. But you couldn't prove it, so. And they didn't want to be called—have the committee man call on them, you know, for—for, you know, giving them a bawling out.

DC: Yeah. So, you'd get your bawling out if you didn't meet the production goal, but what might cause you not to hit the production goal? I mean, what kinds of reasons might there be for not . . .

KN: Well, if the machine broke down.

DC: Machine breakdown, OK.

KN: Yeah, breakdown, yeah. Yeah. And then that has took and happen, where they used to have a lot of problems. Used a lot of hoses with air in it, used to have to blow—blow your cores—your boxes out when you made those cores. And I used to—I don't know why it always did it, whenever it did it, it would take and snap and that hose would fly around all over. I mean, people got hurt, too.

DC: Oh really?

KN: Yeah, you'd have to run, I mean you'd run like heck.

DC: So if the hose got away from someone, it'd just start flying.

KN: Right. And then whoever seen it—usually, well the foreman's usually around there that he could run and shut it off. He knew where to shut it off, because you couldn't—because it was right there by your machine there.

DC: So what did you do, just duck? Or how would you get away from it?

KN: Well, I—hey, I'd take and run. And I've got hit a couple times.

DC: Did you?

KN: Oh yeah. I got hit.

DC: What did it feel like?

KN: It stung. It stung, yeah it stung. Yeah. But—they'd have—it was in a circle like this here, and somehow it took and hit parts of the machinery—uh, would catch it. You had a chance to run away from it.

DC: Oh, OK, it would slow it down.

KN: Right, right. It's—to get it away. But boy, it snapped just like a snake, you know. Yeah.

DC: You talked about the one person who got crushed as well, were there other dangerous . . .

KN: Yeah, well see, that one there was just careless—and another guy thought that he was all through and he took and pushed a button, and—that, that—I just—like I say, it's terrible that I remember all that stuff. I can picture all that, a lot of stuff there.

DC: Were there many injuries?

KN: Oh—no, really not that much. That was one of the worst ones that I seen, that I can remember. That was one of the worst ones. Uh [laughs], another funny one was that—

OK, with this here hose breaking—took and hit this guy over here, and the guy—it took—never ever knew he wore a wig all these years. And anyway, it took and hurt him, and I had—they told me—the boss—the boss told me to take his wig to—they took him to first aid. And the boss told me to pick up that—take that wig and take it to the first aid there. And then—oh, and another time was the guy had his fingers cut off. And they wanted me to get that glove with the finger in there, and I wouldn't do it.

DC: They wanted you to go pick it up?

KN: Huh? Yeah, they was—it was in the glove there, because it was bleeding. Because he was bleeding, they wanted me—but I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. Nope.

DC: Wow. I can understand why.

KN: Yeah. Yeah. So those are the, what you call the—but I got a lot of, a lot of memories from there, and it . . .

DC: What are some of your other memories?

KN: Oh, different places where—the gun job.

DC: Tell me about the gun job.

KN: The gun job, oh gosh. Uh—we used to have to wear—we had to wear those uniforms there, too, and the hats. [laughs]

DC: OK. You had quite a wardrobe.

KN: [laughs] Yeah. And um—oh, this one guy, I never knew he was working with me. You know, like I say, I'm a dumb Polock. If you're Polish you can say it, but if you're not Polish you can't say it.

DC: I won't say it.

KN: [laughs] And uh, this guy was laying on the ground and he's thrashing around. And there's people standing around him. And I was—I can remember him thrashing around there, and there were people standing around, and I'm—run up there and hollering. I wanted to see what they were standing around for, all these people. I run over there to see what was going on, and here this guy was thrashing around and I hollered to those guys and I went to push the one away, for I was gonna go help him. And this is when I found out what—he had a—one of those attacks—those um . . .

DC: Oh, a seizure?

KN: Seizures, yes. And—what you call it—but somebody had took, had put something in his

mouth so he couldn't get this—the tongue. Yeah.

DC: Yeah.

KN: That was the first time I ever knew what a seizure was. Like I say, you know . . .

DC: Yeah, that's a scary thing. I have a sister with epilepsy.

KN: Do you? Oh . . .

DC: Yeah, so—she doesn't usually have the big ones, but she has seizures on occasion.

KN: But you know this here guy, he had a—he went to Canada and had an operation. And it took and helped him. He came back. But then they took and moved me to another plant, I never knew what ever happened to him later on.

DC: So what exactly did you do in the gun plant?

KN: I was on a milling machine.

DC: OK.

KN: And filing and burring here.

DC: OK. Oh, you've got that written down there.

KN: Yeah, they got it on here.

DC: Let's see what it says. Right there—file and burr.

KN: Yeah, and mill—and then this is . . .

DC: 1956 when you went over there. OK. You've topped \$2.00 an hour finally.

KN: Yeah, see these are all the wages. See, I—how one's going up.

DC: Yeah. So tell me what it was like to file and burr. Do you remember?

KN: The what?

DC: When you had the file and burr job. What exactly did you have to do to file and burr?

KN: Well, that was—I don't know why they call it file and burr. To burr you had that machine with a wheel around there, and you took the—there's a—to make a, whenever they'd make a—like there was a burr on the end, you know, when they machined it and it had a burr on

there, we used to have to take this with a wheel and take that burr off of there so it wouldn't be sharp.

DC: OK. So, this is part of Pontiac Motors then? [Unaware at this point of the gun contract in the 1950s]

KN: Yes, it was, hon.

DC: It was, OK. Interesting. They had a gun plant.

KN: Yeah.

DC: All right. So, if I recall right, you said you went there because they just needed some people there at the time. Was it a job you wanted?

KN: No, there was a reduction of force. When I went over to that gun job, they wanted to put me right in that foundry part, after I knew this guy died I didn't—got killed in there—I didn't want to work there—and I told the committee man about it, and he didn't like to have a woman working in there anyway. And—of course, the committeeman got around and anyway, he was able to get me out of there to another one. So he asked me if I wanted to go there, and I said, "Well, sure, anything," you know, because that really got me, that guy that got smashed.

DC: It was after the guy got smashed that you decided that you wanted to be—and they accommodated you.

KN: Yeah.

DC: But you said the guy didn't like women in there anyway.

KN: Well, right, right.

DC: OK. Well how did it compare, then, to the foundry?

KN: The what, the gun job?

DC: Yeah.

KN: Well the machinery—see, you were—that was different kind of machinery, the milling machine. I never worked on—wow, you had to just—everything had to be just so, and push the right button, and uh . . .

DC: Was it hard to learn?

KN: Well, for me it was. Because I was working where I'm with sand, where I didn't have

anything—everything's just a box and it just, you take and the sand would blow in there and that was it. You know, just take and push a button and move it over, you know. Or like in the—like I said, the hardest job was in clamping—that's the hardest job I ever had. And I was, you know—when the guy would take and pour that iron in there, jump around there, I—I got burns, you know, on my legs and that.

DC: Back in the foundry.

KN: Yeah, yeah. So . . .

DC: So was it . . .

KN: It wasn't bad, but I just didn't—I didn't know why. I guess I was used to the foundry. It was hard for me to work with big machinery. And I used to have to—take and push the button a certain way and have to really take and watch it, and that was—made me nervous. That was the hardest job of any of the jobs that I had.

DC: Was it?

KN: Yeah.

DC: OK. And how long were you doing that?

KN: Um, let's see. [shuffling papers]

DC: Next sheet there? Doesn't quite say there, I don't think . . .

KN: Was it '56? Let's see—there's '56. I think [mumbles]. That's terrible that I don't—that I don't [shuffling papers]—I don't know how my boss was able to get this here for me, because they didn't like to do this here stuff here.

DC: Oh really?

KN: Yeah.

DC: Well, in any event, you were there . . .

KN: Probably—probably—maybe, oh let's see. See if they got seventeen on here. And I don't know that—what they mean 117. So . . .

DC: That's the month, yeah. Yeah. Something like that. Looks like you were there [hard to understand] months, but it doesn't say when you went to your next job on that sheet.

KN: Then 112—then it says—but it doesn't say the 112, so I know I was there longer than a month. So they didn't have all these here.

- DC: Yeah, they're missing a few.
- KN: Yeah, quite a few. In fact—[shuffling papers]
- DC: You said it was the hardest—the hardest job you ever had.
- KN: It was that—in the gun job, yeah. Yeah.
- DC: Yeah. Again, what kinds of people were you working with in the gun shop? You said that there were lots of black men and black women, and white women, but all kinds in the gun shop?
- KN: Yeah. All kinds, yeah. Yeah, there was.
- DC: OK. Was there any difference in who got what kinds of jobs at the gun plant?
- KN: No, no. No. It was pretty good.
- DC: Were you still married at that point in time?
- KN: Uh—[short pause] yes, I was.
- DC: OK, all right. And was your husband still commuting down to Dodge Main?
- KN: Yes, he was. Yeah.
- DC: When there was work, anyway.
- KN: Yeah.
- DC: How was your boss in the gun plant?
- KN: They was all good. I had—the best one I had, that was when I retired. I had the best boss. Everybody liked him. *Everybody* liked Walt Spencer. Production and everybody.
- DC: How did he get to be a boss? Did he come up through the ranks, or . . .
- KN: Yeah, he did. He did, yeah. In fact, I just seen him here last summer after about, oh my goodness, after thirteen years, and he just [?]. And the poor guy, he's um—he's—[pause] the kidneys, he's got to . . .
- DC: Oh, he has to have dialysis.
- KN: Dialysis.

DC: Yeah.

KN: I just can't believe it. I can't believe that guy has—*everybody* liked Walt Spencer.

DC: Did you ever get laid off from any of these jobs? I know you got laid off from Fisher Body way back when, but in your time at the foundry and the gun plant, did you ever . . .

KN: No, no. I was—just when the strikes.

DC: Just the strikes. OK.

KN: The strikes, yeah. The one was, what did I tell you it was? Sixty days, and I think another one was ninety days.

DC: OK, one sixty day strike, one ninety day strike.

KN: Ninety, yeah.

DC: OK. Let's see. So did you find that the men accepted women? I mean, I know your supervisor had some problems with women in the foundry. But did you find that the men workers accepted women?

KN: Yeah. You know, I find that they did. You know, like I say, there was lazy women there, too. And they'd try to think and—I guess they'd try to get away, get away from doing stuff. And—but uh . . .

DC: All right. I mean, was it just a matter of who did the work and who didn't, or was there any specific teasing because you were women?

KN: No, no, no. No, you know, those foremen, I tell you what, I couldn't say anything. The only one who was that one there—that, and I don't know—well, it was him. The only one who was that—and that was the production guy I know that took and switched those tags on that basket. That's the only one. That's the only time that I ever had a problem with any of the foremen there. Yeah.

DC: OK. So, you know, there are a lot of stories about, you know, foremen who tried to date workers and stuff like that . . .

KN: Oh! Oh, yeah, there was. Oh yeah. You could see it. You could see it and, you know—that, of course, you know I just—being-old fashioned, I was against that, too, you know. That some of them—well, some of them got away with it, too, you know.

DC: Some of the foremen?

- KN: By doing it, yeah. And—but, as long as it didn't involve me, I didn't care what they did.
- DC: What would happen if women wouldn't go out with a foreman?
- KN: Well—they usually did. To get the good jobs, yeah.
- DC: Oh, really? OK.
- KN: Yeah, they did. I've seen that happen, yeah. Yeah, I've seen that. It didn't involve me and it didn't involve my job, so . . .
- DC: So you could get a better job that way?
- KN: Well, they uh—they—they didn't get production, why . . .
- DC: Oh, I see.
- KN: They could, you know—never got a bawling out.
- DC: Gotcha. OK. So it may not get them a better job, but they would protect them?
- KN: Yeah, well see, you know—there's a lot of women there that they—they thought that if they did that, they'd get a—they were probably having problems at home then, too. I don't know. But there was a lot of that—see a lot of that going on over there. And—otherwise, well there's mostly, they were good guys. There were just maybe a couple out of the whole bunch, I would say out of the whole plant, so that wasn't very many, you know, that would do that. What they did, like I said, that was their business. I didn't care, as long as it didn't—it didn't interfere with my thing, you know, so.
- DC: Yeah. Did you ever take time off when your son was born?
- KN: Yes, I did.

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

- DC: . . . OK. Was your job waiting for you when you were ready to come back?
- KN: When I came back, I um—let's see . . .
- DC: Did you have any kind of guarantee that you'd get your job back?

- KN: Oh yeah. Yeah. It was there—anyplace in there, you know, you didn't have no—you punch in, you had a certain department number, but I think I—yes, I did, I came back. Because I had came back and it was on afternoons. And it was on the slingers. Yeah.
- DC: All right. Let's see. So, I gotta get my order right. After the gun plant—you were there, it looks like maybe a year or so.
- KN: About a year, I would say, yeah.
- DC: And then at that point . . .
- KN: Then I went to Plant . . .
- DC: Plant 9.
- KN: Plant 9, yeah.
- DC: OK. And what did you do in Plant 9?
- KN: Uh . . .
- DC: Well first of all, why did you go to Plant 9? You might have told me already.
- KN: Reduction of force.
- DC: Reduction of force, OK. All right. So there were layoffs and you were able to get in at Plant 9. Did you choose to go to Plant 9, or was that . . .
- KN: No, I have to go wherever they . . .
- DC: Wherever they say.
- KN: Yeah.
- DC: OK. And what did you do in Plant 9?
- KN: Let's see, I worked in the rod department.
- DC: Rod department—that was the connecting rods?
- KN: Making rods, yeah. Rods.
- DC: OK. I know we're sneaking up on some of the stuff we've already talked about, but since I'm only hearing it for the first time, I sometimes have to do it twice.

KN: Right. Yeah.

DC: And tell me how you liked that job.

KN: Oh, that was good. That was—yeah.

DC: And what was good about it?

KN: Well, it was easy, as far as I was concerned. We used to have to take the—the guys that made the rods, they had to go down the line and used to take them off the line. And we used to put them in a great big round machine and put them in there and it'd go around and somebody else would take them off over there when they were burred, you know. It's like a sanded . . .

DC: All smoothed out. OK.

KN: Yeah, yeah.

DC: All right. And who all were you working with there? Was it—what kinds of people . . .

KN: Two of us was working. One put them in, one put them out, took them out.

DC: Oh, OK. All right. So you worked in a conveyor.

KN: Yeah. Yeah, right, right.

DC: OK. And how big was the department?

KN: Oh, that rod department was pretty big. They had quite a few rod people that made the rods. Oh, gosh. [pause] Oh, maybe eight to ten machines down there making them and putting them on the line and—to catch them we took turns. This guy and I took turns. I'd do it—so many hours I would take them off there and put them in there and then so many hours I'd take them off and just put them on there. And—so it was an easy job. Just that they were heavy—I mean, rods, they were heavy.

DC: So *physically* hard but easy to master?

KN: Right, right, right. I mean, you could do it with your eyes closed after awhile, yeah.

DC: Were there many women in that department?

KN: Oh, yeah. There was, there was mixed. Yeah. But there was mostly men making the rods. And there was—I think there was—well, let's see [?]. I was working the second shift on that one there, so—me and another guy there, so . . .

- DC: Did you work second shift because you had to, to get a job?
- KN: Well, but seniority. Seniority.
- DC: Seniority. Yeah, that's what I meant. Yeah, you didn't have enough seniority with all the layoffs.
- KN: Yeah. Right. And then word got around—I don't know how it got around. I heard that they were needing inspectors, and I wanted to get on inspection, and I heard they was having inspection on camshafts. And so this is how I—oh, I got moved from the rod job, OK. Rod job—I wanted to get on days, so there was an opening in the camshaft department. That's how I got to go over there, and on inspection. And I used to have to—they came down the—what do you call it?—used to inspection—and the guy would take and—it was on, like rollers, you know. Because I inspected them when they come down. I'd take the camshaft and put it in these things here, and this guy would take and put them through the furnace, or oven is what they call—I think that was the oven there. And—that was a good job. I liked inspection.
- DC: OK. Now, let's see. Did you have to bid on that job? How did you get that opening?
- KN: Well I heard there was an opening and I had the seniority for it, that I was able to get in there. That's how I got . . .
- DC: So that means that no one with more seniority wanted it?
- KN: Right, right. Yeah.
- DC: OK. All right. And how did you find out that you got that job?
- KN: Uh—you know what, I don't know.
- DC: I just wondered . . .
- KN: Well, how we got it was we put in. You put in and you sign the paper, saying you want to be transferred from that department to another department. If it was opening, if you wanted, why, you could go in there. That's how it was. And if I had the seniority, OK. But if somebody else from another department had it, they'd get it before I would.
- DC: Now did you keep your seniority when you moved to a different department?
- KN: Oh yes. Oh yeah.
- DC: You did. OK. So you had the inspection job then.
- KN: Yeah. I was inspector there. All the time, then when I got—the camshafts got moved to

Plant 18, they moved the whole department over to 18.

DC: That's when you all moved, OK. Do you remember why you moved to Plant 18?

KN: To plant 18? Because they moved the department over there.

DC: But I mean, why they moved the department—do you know what . . .

KN: They were making—what they heck were they making? They wanted to enlarge—what the heck department was it they were enlarging? [pause] Hum. They were enlarging a department—and then after awhile, that wasn't big enough. They took and made a—they moved that whole department over to Plant 50—51 or 55, I forget. Yeah.

DC: Do you remember when they moved it all over to Plant 18?

KN: Uh. [shuffling papers]

DC: I don't know if it's gonna tell us on there or not. We'll see.

KN: Looks like '74.

DC: I wonder if it says in here?

KN: Says here '70 in here.

DC: 1970?

KN: [shuffling papers] Wait—it says '70 on here—inspector '53, '53. I worked there for quite a few years. Yeah, in '70. Let's see. It's odd. This—inspector—in '70.

DC: 1970 is when they moved over to . . .

KN: Yeah. Yeah, because it's '70, '71, and '72.

DC: OK, so it sounds like you were in Plant 9 for quite some time then.

KN: Yes.

DC: Yeah, OK. Probably—maybe even as much as 14 years, 15, 14 years.

KN: It doesn't say on here—see they only wrote these here. There's different—then it seems like they cut some of these off over here, so.

DC: Yeah. Well, you know, I'd be able to find that out somewhere else, because someone would know when that switched. But did you do the same job then, still inspecting

camshafts?

KN: Inspection. And then, let's see—quality control. Wait, wait, wait here's quality control. Camshafts—quality control is different—inspection, inspection. See, it don't tell in here when I went over there. In '70 is when I went on to quality control. Special, special, special, special—uh, they changed it. See it don't have—it had on there 18, 50, it's all the same department, but it don't—it doesn't say . . .

DC: Well, we can figure out the year, but it sounds like you inspected camshafts for a good long time.

KN: Yeah.

DC: And you told me a little bit about that job. Is there anything else you—[phone ringing] do you want to get your phone? [short break]

KN: . . . Quality control is different than inspection. I used to have to—quality control, I took—I had to make sure all the gauges on inspection were checked. Each one had a different—some had thirty days, some had ninety days, some had a year or six months, depends how they were used. And this is with quality control. That's when I got off the camshafts.

DC: Off the camshafts, OK.

KN: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. Now is that a job that you bid on again?

KN: No, no, no. He asked me. The foreman asked me if I wanted to. But I liked camshafts, I really did. That was—I really liked that.

DC: Were you glad you shifted to quality control?

KN: Oh, at first it was kinda hard, because I didn't quite understand the—the—I was scared that I wasn't gonna do it right, but my boss stuck with me and I got to learn. And—I used to have to—when I was in 18, we used to have to take it—I used to take it to inspection department over in Plant 9. And I used to have to put them in a wheel—they used to have a wagon and I used to have to carry it—wheel it over to Plant 9, and that was, oh I forget how many plants. And take it to—they used to inspect it over there. Then I'd have to go get it, but I kept track of everything. And I had to make sure that they were right and if they run out of gauges or get worn out I had to do the ordering. And, that's when I had—I lost a lot of time on that. That's when they took and put me on different committees on there. I got to know different people. I got to be on the United Way for I don't know how many years. Then they got me on the open house thing. Then they got me on the picnic committee—we had for quite a few years and they did away with it. That was something. But I was able to do that stuff working with—in my job, you know, I'd work like heck and

get it done and then be able to take and do it.

DC: Yeah. So, let's see—I'm trying to think. You were living at this point—where were you living at this point?

KN: Here.

DC: Right in here, this place. OK. This spot.

KN: Yeah.

DC: And so your kids grew up here then?

KN: Um—J.R. was twelve years old when he come—let's see, I was married for eighteen years—seventeen years with Tony and I got a divorce. And the kids come and live with me. And—so J.R. went to school here and Nancy went to school here, too. Over there in Utica and over here, they went to Utica, too.

DC: OK, this is all Utica schools.

KN: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. I'm trying to figure out—I mean, how were you able to balance your work and family and all in those years? I'm talking about, you know, mainly in the foundry through the '50s and all.

KN: Well—about the family there—well it's like I said, my mother was right there, and then after awhile when my brothers got married, why, then she come and she lived with me for twenty-nine and a half years. So I was lucky that their Dad and—my husband got along real good. They got along real good, yeah. So . . .

DC: OK, that's good. Did your Mother do the cooking and all when she was staying with you?

KN: Oh, she—well, see she did some, and he liked what she made, you know. And she did—well, she was Polish, you know, and she made pierogies and she made golabkis and the only thing I learned how to make was the golabkis, because pierogies she'd make when I would go for work, and they'd be all done; where golabkis, why, that's the only thing I got to learn to make. And she—she took care of the yard. She, you know, she still had the farmer in her. And to this day I still have a little garden out there. I do all my yard work and everything myself. I got my little tractor and—and keep it up, and it keeps me going. Where before, Bill did it, you know. And he died of cancer, so that's—well, like I say, that made me—that made me what I am today. I was able to do it. To carry on after he left. Yeah.

DC: What kinds of things did you do as a family in the '50s? When the kids were young, did

you go on any trips?

KN: We used to go—we used to go to Warsaw Park. And we used to have—the friends of ours who we grew up with, at that time like they were, like I was telling you about these neighbors on the farm there. They got married, and they had kids. And then after awhile we all got together. They all moved someplace around here. And we'd go from one house to another house, and then we'd have picnics at our houses. And that's—and to this day, you know, like those days they were so close to us that—they were no relation, but they always—my kids and their kids would say, “Aunt Katie,” = “Uncle Tony,” you know, all that. And to this day they still do call—these people, you know, their kids call that. So—but Warsaw Park was our main thing. Yeah.

DC: So did the—was it still mainly a Polish gathering then?

KN: Oh yes. Oh yeah. Yeah, there were, you know what, Polish, Ukranian. Yeah. And some of them were married to Englishmen, but they—I know we always got along real good there. I used to—of course, then my kids—my kids that hung around—well their parents, they went to school with my kids. And then they had kids. And at this house here, why, this here one, I know that she had three kids. She had all her graduation parties over here because I had the big yard, the big house. And her mother's fiftieth wedding anniversary, because I had the yard here. And before there, we'd go from different houses and that was a lot of fun, too, we'd have, you know. And the kids would always go with us, and them days in the '50s and that. But Warsaw Park was our big thing, yeah.

DC: And, let's see—you had a car at that point, right?

KN: The first car I got, I tell you what, when I worked—what the heck was it? [pause] I'll be right back. [tape recorder turned off for a little bit]

DC: Sure.

KN: A blue Chevy.

DC: Just for the record, a '59 Chevy. Because I forgot to turn it back on again. OK.

KN: '59 Chevy, yeah.

DC: Wow. Now was your husband driving a car down to Dodge Main or was he hitching a ride?

KN: Yeah, he had—he always drove Chryslers. He always had Chryslers.

DC: Yeah, I guess it makes sense.

KN: And, but that there where I got strong enough that I went in and got that—well I had to, because we—this is when we went and got the—I think this—is that when we got the

divorce, is why I got this car, I think. Or shortly after—no, it was after because I was still living over there yet. But I was—I couldn't find a ride to work and I had to get one, so I was—got enough nerve to get one. And—because you know, we were buying this house here, too, so—it made it rough. I was kinda scared, you know, I was worrying about this and that. But that was the first car I ever bought myself was the '59 Chevy.

DC: Well there was a big recession in 1958, too. I don't know if you ever worried about keeping your job at that point.

KN: Oh, yeah. Well, at that time, I had quite a bit of—I guess I just didn't think about it. And, well, like I said, there was—had this strike that one time, that was—what did I tell you? It was sixty days. And then the other one was ninety days. Now that one there, that was scary right there. But—what the heck were we getting at that time? We got a raise, that we was each able to get. And we—if we needed food stamps, we could get food stamps, too. But I didn't because we—we had stuff on—you know, grew, grew. I had a garden even on, when I lived over on Dequindre there. And then over here we had a garden, too, so. I mean, I was able to freeze—I froze a lot of stuff.

DC: Did it take a lot of nerve to get a divorce in that era?

KN: Yeah, at that time, yeah. It was—it was a sad thing, but we got along better after we got divorced than we did then, you know. But it was something, and—that hurt. [pause]

DC: Did you ever, in those years, did you pay any attention to what the national union officers were doing, what the national union was doing?

KN: You know, I used to—I used to, like I said, I worked in—when we had that strike there, I worked in the union hall there. And it—used to have the room in it. And why did I ever get wherever the representative would have to be? And, oh, I guess this was me and there was three of us used to write the checks after. And he says, “oh, give him a check,” we'd have to, you know. And one time, oh I'm trying to think of what it was that I had to—I used to think it was terrible that whites and—whites and blacks would go out with each other. And I had to go way downtown with this colored guy. He took me downtown to the union hall, office rather, for something to correct something. And, I'm sitting in the car driving there and I'm looking, and I see so many, like, people are looking at me. “Hey, she's with a black guy,” you know. And ever since then, that cured me right then and there. That goes to show you what I was thinking before was evil, because you could be just riding with somebody to work and that. And that's—that there, it changed my mind about, if I seen one with the other, you know. Like in the cars is what had got me. Yeah. But the union there, I—I learned a lot. I learned a lot. We—and how some people try to pull some stuff on the union and—but hey, if you needed some help, they were there to help you.

DC: Let's try to see if we can get a few specific examples of, you know, people who tried to pull something on the union and then ways that the union helped.

KN: Well, like I told you, was that we went on that strike there, and they was supposed to come and sign up right away, and they didn't sign up. They had gone someplace, took a trip someplace. And they weren't there to sign up and they had to sign up, and they didn't. Why, this rep would—representative would be the one that tell you, "hey, if you had a good excuse: my mother was sick or somebody died or something," well then they got a check. Otherwise, they didn't get a check. They would have to take and wait until the following week to get that check, and that was for the first week we were off.

DC: How about ways that the union was there for people when they needed them?

KN: Well, listen, if you needed food, they were there. You could—you went to a certain group and they'd give you stamps and where to go.

DC: You're thinking about during strikes here, or was this anytime?

KN: Yeah, during the strike. During the strike, hon, yeah.

DC: OK. So did you pay attention at all to things that, you said like, Walter Reuther was up to?

KN: Walter Reuther was a great guy, I tell you what. He was a great guy. When he took and—was gone there, I mean it really hurt me. Because he did a lot. Walter Reuther, maybe it's—well not—he did, he did good in the union. His brother, Roy, used to live next door to my mother-in-law at one time. And it was so surprising to think that later on, that—who I got to know—Roy, I mean Walter. And . . .

DC: You got to know him?

KN: Yeah, because I'd—yeah. Then Walter come up, you know, got to be the big rep. And to think we never talked anything about it when they lived next door to my mother-in-law's. And they were real—and his brother was real nice and that. Well they never talked about the union or nothing, you know. We knew that he belonged to a union—I didn't know what the heck a union was. That was before I went to work, you know. That's when I had Nancy. And then he was his brother there, but Roy did a lot. He was the one that made the—what's that up north, they got . . .

DC: Oh, the Black Lake?

KN: Black Lake, that's it. Black Lake, yeah.

DC: Did you ever meet Walter there?

KN: Huh? No, you know, I never got a chance—I got one chance to go to there, but it was on a holiday and I couldn't go. It was [?]. And the certain ones, well they—certain people got to go more than one time, so, like I said you know, you got to know what was what. But

I've always wanted to, but I've sure read a lot about it.

DC: Did you ever see Walter over at his brother's house?

KN: Yes, yes. One time, but I didn't know who he was.

DC: Yeah, interesting.

KN: Yeah. Well there is—he had, he had a couple brothers that come over there. But after awhile, you know, then I'm thinking, you know, when he said it was, you know, why—because my mother-in-law used to raise strawberries and I used to go over there and I used to pick it for them, you know. This is how I got to knowing about who that was.

DC: Oh, OK.

KN: Yeah. And it was so funny then, but—that was really sad about what had happened.

DC: Yeah. Hmm. What kinds of questions should I be asking that I'm not asking you?

KN: I don't know. I don't know, see. I don't—this is the first time I ever did this, and I'm kind of nervous, too, but you know. It seems like I'm jumping here and there maybe.

DC: No, not at all. I think it's really fascinating. I'm just wondering if there are some issues that you thought I would ask about that I haven't, or . . .

KN: Well, I tell you what, all I can say for the union, it was—I'm lucky that I'm able to—to have got everything that I have now, and I can say nothing against the union, it's—I guess maybe because I was lucky. I don't know if anybody ever had problems or not, but—I know of, you know. And they was always helpful. And all the presidents we had, you know, I used to work right there and I used to be a—on the—oh, what the heck do they call that? It's been so long. At the union there—voting, on the voting there.

DC: Did the union get involved in campaigns?

KN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

DC: Do you remember any particular campaigns the union got involved in?

KN: Well, the committee men—committee man and then you'd have—for presidents.

DC: Local presidents, you mean?

KN: Yeah, local, yeah. And—well, there's a committeeman and there was, what. Oh, my God, of all the different kinds in there—in there, to take and vote.

- DC: Were there ever any significant divisions within the local union, you know, certain candidates who wanted the union to go in a certain direction?
- KN: Well they had, yes—well they had, like, black and white, they had the black and—what was it? Black and white? Blue and white?
- DC: Blue and white. And what differences were there between those two groups?
- KN: Well they—they were just like a Republican and Democrat. Then there was, there was one that was, like, neutral. But, boy they did fight one against the other. And that I could never understand. But, well, I just did it with the guy and oh, he used to run for committeeman. That used to bother me is that the guys would take and when they'd find—they'd find or—most of them probably were lies, as far as I was concerned. I don't know. But they—something dirty about them, pass this literature around so you wouldn't vote for so and so, you know. And that's the only thing that really bothered me was when they would do that. Then I wouldn't take and vote for them because I, you know, nine times out of ten it was all wrong—well they just—anything dirty. Yeah.
- DC: Sounds like a congressional campaign or something.
- KN: Yeah, but you know, all the presidents at the union that we've had, they were all great. You always got help. Yeah.
- DC: Did you ever have to go to the president of the union for help?
- KN: Uh—no. Um—no, [short pause] I'm not gonna say this here. They were all—they was all good. Yeah, they was all good. You needed—I mean, you could talk to them, you wouldn't—he'd say, hey yes or no, if you didn't like it, that's, you know . . .
- DC: Sure. Did the union ever get involved in—your local union ever get involved in, like, mayor races or city council races, or any other campaigns?
- KN: Um—I think, they did in Pontiac. I think they did in Pontiac. They did, but I didn't live in Oakland County so it didn't bother me, I mean, you know. And well, to this day, they have, you know, they have people that are running, and—but I don't vote for them. They pass the literature, like they have the fourth month—the fourth week of the month, they have a retirees dinner there, you know. It'll cost you two dollars—well, you've been there, OK. And then they have the people that they want you to vote for—like they get—this year they got [Gubernatorial primary candidate David] Bonior. But Bonior's from over here, and so—I mean, I can vote for him because he's from Macomb County.
- DC: Sure. And the governor primary . . .
- KN: Right, right. Yeah. And it's gonna be hard this year. I just don't know. I really don't know how to turn. But . . .

- DC: Do you remember your local union being involved in advocating for candidates, let's say, when you first started out, as well?
- KN: No, no I don't hon. No. I don't remember any of them. Of course, like I said, if they did, I didn't pay any attention because I lived in Macomb County all the time. And if they did it over there, I—bt I don't think they even did it over there. But they had—but you know what, the union always had somebody to represent if you had a problem. Like they had safety men, you know. And that was good. That helped a lot. Because there was, you know, some places there was—they really needed them.
- DC: Did you ever use the safety men?
- KN: [pause] Nope. Nope, I didn't. I can't remember that I needed a safety man, really.
- DC: Would they investigate problems with safety? Is that what they would do?
- KN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, yeah. I don't remember ever really—that I—you know, like I said, I only had to have the committeeman a couple times and the safety man, no. But I seen different departments that did use the safety man, you know. And I think they had every reason, like—they use OSHA, you know.
- DC: Yeah, that would be later.
- KN: Right, right. Yeah. So . . .
- DC: Back in the years when you were in the foundry, and the gun plant and all that . . .
- KN: Right, but Plant 9—Plant 18 is what I can remember OSHA. OSHA in Plant 18. And the foundry there, you know, we didn't you know, just . . .
- DC: It wouldn't have been OSHA back then, so . . .
- KN: Yeah. Yeah.
- DC: But I was thinking, you know, you said you worked with a lot of women. Do you remember if most of those women were married or single?
- KN: Yeah, most of—there was a lot of married women. Yes there was, yes there was. Really, yeah. Because they were talking about—with the children there, and—but their husbands would work in different plants—they never had it that they would work in the same plant, though. But . . .
- DC: It seems like you were fortunate in that your Mother was able to look after your kids.

KN: Yes I was. I was very lucky.

DC: I wonder how some of these other women worked out . . .

KN: Well, they used to—I used to hear them talk about that they'd have to have somebody come over and watch them. If they didn't show up, they'd be late for work and they'd get heck. And—from the foreman. Of course you can only do it so long. Of course, if you had a good foreman he'd, you know, he'd kind of let it go. But he had to put his foot down. And I could see his way, you know. Because hey, production, too, and get help. Because they had, they had to meet a quota, too.

DC: Right, yeah. So mostly it was friends . . .

KN: But I was—I was lucky I was able to get along with my foreman. [pause] The only time that I can remember I had a—[laughs] I come across a picture over here, and I forgot all about it. A suggestion—I used to write a lot of suggestions. And I was able to—to make enough suggestions, and I took and—my daughter was ready to buy a house. I gave her all these suggestions. I used to make them—so many for one grandchild, another for the other grandchild. And then when they were ready to buy a house, they didn't have enough money for a down payment and I give them these here suggestions there. But I remember this one here. I took and put it in there, and this was my favorite foreman. [laughs] And so, he wouldn't let me—he told me that was part of my job. And so I told another guy to take and turn it in. And he got something for it. And my foreman, Walt, he told me that was part of my job, that I should've caught that, whatever it was. So he didn't buy that, and I still rub it into him to this day. Yeah.

DC: I really appreciate you spending time with me. This has been fascinating for me.

KN: I don't know what else there is there, I mean I just can take and show you.

DC: Oh, there's lots, but . . .

KN: Like I said, when I was in 18, this is when I got the job that they give me. If anybody retired I'd go around, take a collection, and I'd have to order the cake and buy the coffee—make the coffee and everything, and—but that was, you know . . .

DC: I was wondering if you'd let me take a look at this, here?

KN: I think, I think I got two of them, hon.

DC: If you do—I mean, I'd give it back for sure.

KN: No, no, no. I think I got—let's see, I even got a bigger one here.

DC: Wow.

- KN: I think this is—yeah, I got one right here.
- DC: You have one right there, OK, all right. Well, if you don't mind . . .
- KN: No, no, you can have that. And—let's see what I got. This here—here, I've got a history—of course, you're with the union [which wasn't the case, but apparently was her perception]—this is Pontiac Motors, [?] about Pontiac Motors.
- DC: It always helps to learn that, too, because you can learn an awful lot from . . .
- KN: Oh that's the only one I have on here . . .
- DC: No I'm not, I'm not—I'll see if I can get a hold of some of that stuff from other people. Maybe from the local union.
- KN: I should have a few things here. [shuffling papers] Yes I do. I even have one of these. Here's an open house.
- DC: Oh, you have an extra one.
- KN: Yeah—that's the part that I was in. Now you can have that one.
- DC: Oh, thank you.
- KN: And if there's anything else here that you would be—that you would want.
- DC: Well, I wouldn't mind looking through sometime, but I don't know if—I should probably get going before long here.
- KN: Oh, you've got a long ways . . .
- DC: I'll be back through the rush hour.
- KN: Yeah, what time is it? Now is a good time, yeah. And uh, let's see—what was one of these—they had a diagram of . . .
- DC: That's pretty amazing.
- KN: That's the one I wanted to show—that's the one I was looking for. OK, take a couple of these. OK. All right.
- DC: Yeah, that's amazing. [it's a map of the Pontiac Motor facility in the 1920s]
- KN: They made some separate that they passed around. That's what I was looking for.

DC: Oh I see. OK. Uh huh. Wow. That's enormous.

KN: Isn't that something?

DC: Do you remember where your foundry was and all that?

KN: Oh no. I'll tell you what [hard to understand]. Uh, let's see—this is the union—this is from the union. Is that the 40th?

DC: This would be the 40th as well, but . . .

KN: Let's see . . .

DC: Oh, I can bring them all back. You know that.

KN: Well no, I don't—I don't—I might give you this here, but I don't . . .

DC: I'm not sure, but it looks like this one might have as much as—information as—this looks—this looks like it's the program for your, for the 40th anniversary. This looks like the actual program.

KN: Yeah, that's the one that—Leon was in that. Let's see if I've got one over here. You know what this here one is . . .

DC: That looks like the same thing.

KN: Yeah, but this is better. This is . . .

DC: No, no. Let me have this one. You keep that good one.

KN: This is an open house in '82, and it wasn't that much of a thing. [some talking over each other]

DC: This is amazing—how they kept track of things before computers, huh? [laughs]

KN: You know, I had a rough time, because they didn't, they didn't believe that I started that early. Yeah, they tried to knock it out. And after I retired, oh, it must have been, what, quite a few months after that, that I had to go in there and show them that I—that I did work that—when I started in there. If you want me to, I'll take and Xerox some of these.

DC: That would be great if you could, yeah.

KN: Did you want them—give me an address.

DC: Sure.

KN: Would it be . . .

DC: I don't know if it's on that sheet or not.

KN: OK, what do I write it to?

DC: [gives his Oakland University address] . . .

DC: What was your maiden name?

KN: Lapanowski.

DC: Lapanowski—how do you spell that?

KN: L-A-P-A- (but I never used that on any of these here).

DC: I know, because you're a Kardys.

KN: L-A-P-A-N-O-W-S-K-I.

DC: OK. All right.

KN: You know, my mother—my mother never—she could only spell her first name. And when she used to get her social security check, she used to make an "X" and I used to have to—she'd put the "X" and I would sign, you know.

DC: Oh—so she couldn't write.

KN: Right. She only went to the third grade. But you know, she learned a lot from—I went and got a—from TV. She learned so much from TV. Yeah. And she just, she was one great lady, I tell you.

DC: What part of Poland did they come from?

KN: Warsaw.

DC: Oh, from Warsaw.

KN: No, no. Ukraine. Ukraine.

DC: Oh, they were in the Ukraine. In Ukraine. Why did they end up here?

KN: I don't—you know, she never did say why—I have picture albums, but they weren't

here—this is so old. She's just an old, Polish—you know, she never, ever wore a bra. We used to go to weddings and that, she used to take a cloth and she'd take and tie it underneath and lift them up. That's how old-fashioned she was. OK, listen. I'll take and copy, Xerox these and I'll send them to this here for you hon.

DC: That's wonderful, I really appreciate it. And if I think of other things after I listen to this again—I'll probably come across things that I wish I had asked.

KN: Well, you do—write them down, hon, and I will—I will answer them the best that I can.

DC: I appreciate it.

KN: Because I don't think that you want any of these here—newspapers here. They used to send these to us, you know. And I used to hang onto them.

DC: Let's see.

KN: Let's see. Yeah, OK—this is the one.

DC: Oh yeah, that's the same thing.

KN: Same thing isn't it, yeah. That's what I was looking for, yeah. You can have that one there, if you want it.

DC: Thanks, yeah. You have two of them. Wow.

KN: My granddaughter, she's into old stuff there, and—that's all that I know that—I went through superintendents and everything over here, and Richard Petty.

DC: Richard Petty.

KN: Richard Petty. This cat is getting to be fourteen years old. These are all just—what are these here for? Oh from the union, there, you got different people. And I got to know a lot of big shots there, superintendents and what's-their-names. But I'll make these and I'll send them to you at this here place here, hon.

DC: Thank you. I really appreciate that.

KN: Yeah, and if there's anything else you think of, just let me know.

DC: I will. I'll make sure I have this labeled before I leave.

KN: OK.

DC: And I'll let you get back to what you're doing.

KN: These are the benefits that I got when I applied for . . .

DC: Is this you? Benefits? Is this for retiree—or your retiree benefits?

KN: Yeah, this was what I was going to get when I first quit—when I retired, rather. [wild noise starts again] The union got us a lot of things. The pension plan, yeah.

DC: Well, you worked hard for those benefits.

KN: Yeah, you know, I was lucky. That's one thing I can say about the union. You know, even Pontiac Motors, I can't say anything—where a lot of people, they, they stew over a lot of little things. I can see some of them, but I always felt that that was their fault, whatever happened.

End of Interview