Dorothy Sackle Interview
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Clarkston, Michigan
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DC: . . . I start out with really basic questions, you know, for instance, where were you born?

DS: All right.

DC: Where were you born?

DS: Where?

DC: Yeah.

DS: In Detroit.

DC: In Detroit, OK. Where in Detroit were you?

DS: On Warren and—on the East Side.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Were your parents from Detroit as well?

DS: Yeah—my Mother was from here and my Father was from Poland.

DC: From Poland? OK. And when did he move to the U.S.?

DS: Well, he came here when he was sixteen years old.

DC: OK. So he was in Poland until he was sixteen?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Wow. OK. And did he come straight to Detroit?

DS: [short pause] Yes, I think so. Yeah, because—I know he took a vacation to Boston because Boston was the closest to Poland. That's what he said. Yeah. So, I don't know. I don't know why he, you know, chose Boston, but he did that.

DC: [concerning the microphone] Let's see if I can get that to hold still. There, OK. That looks

better.

DS: That better?

DC: It was just slipping around. All right. So, do you mind me asking when you were born?

DS: Yeah, 2-2—February the 2nd, 1917.

DC: 1917, my goodness.

DS: Yeah. So I'm pretty old. [laughs]

DC: Well, you're doing very well—1917. All right, and so your Mother was from Detroit then?

DS: Yeah.

DC: OK. And let's see—1917—so in what year, then, did your Father come over? He was sixteen years old, but . . .

DS: Yeah, what year would that be?

DC: What year would that be?

DS: My God. [pause] Let me think. He was born in 1888, so figure that out. [laughs]

DC: I can figure that out—that's perfect. That would've been about 1904, in that range.

DS: Yeah.

DC: OK. All right. And do you have any idea if your Mother's parents were from Detroit?

DS: Um—my grandmother was from Germany.

DC: She was from Germany, all right.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. Let's see—when your Father came to Detroit, had any of his relatives come before him?

DS: No, I don't think so. Yeah. And um—well, I don't know what year that was—I went back to Poland and I wanted to find some of his relatives, but they say since the war, everything was ruined, or there was nothing—no—anyway, I couldn't trace his family, so, yeah.

DC: OK.

DS: Oh, his brother came here. Yeah, his brother came here. And he was in the service, but not in Poland. He must've been in the service here. My Father's brother, John. Yeah. So—so that's why I wrote to his wife and I wanted to know—oh my God, where are those papers? Too bad. She wrote, she told me the name of the place that they were born. I can't remember.

DC: Yeah, that's OK—that's all right. Do you know what your Father did when he came to Detroit?

DS: Yeah, he was a coremaker, whatever is a coremaker. C-O-R-E. And that was—I think that must've been working with some kind of fire or something, because he came home—and he worked for Ford Motor, too. So, he was pretty tired when he came home, you know.

DC: Did he start in right when he was sixteen, or did he start later?

DS: No, I think after he got married. Yeah, I don't know what he did from the time he was sixteen, or where he lived or, you know, because . . .

DC: Yeah, it would've been very early, I guess, at that point, if I think about it—1904, that would've been too early.

DS: Yeah.

DC: How did your parents meet?

DS: At a dance, probably.

DC: OK, yeah.

DS: They had dances then, yeah. Yeah, so . . .

DC: What do you remember growing up in Detroit? What was it like to grow up in Detroit when you were young?

DS: It was very nice. I—my—I don't know, he must've been paid pretty good because when I was eight years old, they bought a house on [Miriam?]. When I was eight years old, they bought a new house, you know. Funniest thing, because I went on the railing, you know, and my Father cracked me because he says, "Don't be such a wild Indian. This is a nice neighborhood!" [Laughs.] I always remember that, you know. So anyway, we lived in the nice house, you know, and we used to go to the grocery store, and at that time they used to have—I guess because my Father only got paid once a week or something—so they would write in this book how much groc—how much the groceries would cost, you know. So—and then when we paid the bill, then they would give us a little bag of candy—Mary Janes and Squirrels, you know, and things like that. So that was nice, you know.

DC: Sure. Do you remember where you lived or what kind of house you lived in, or apartment, before you moved into that new one?

DS: Yeah, we lived—I just, I just saw that someplace, that we lived—God, I wonder—you know what, my daughter-in-law took all this information because she's making a family tree. So I gave her all these things. You know, when my Father died and my Mother died—too bad I didn't know that, then I could get all that back and then I could tell you all this.

DC: Well there might be a way to get that information at some point. But I can just—the dates make a bit of difference, but mostly I want to tap into your memories about what life was like. Do you remember going to school?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: What was your school like?

DS: Very nice. I—I won some kind of an art picture, because I named all the—the painters, you know, like—now I forget! And God, I wish I would've had that—I got the picture from the teacher, you know, and it was by Monet. Yeah. But with moving so much, you know, and then I got divorced when—1930-something. So then when you move, you throw these things out, I mean, and then when you're about, you know, twenty-five to thirty, you figure you don't need these things, you know. And now I wish I had them, because, God, a picture of Monet, you know. So anyway . . .

DC: Oh boy. Well, we'll sneak up on the 1930s here in a few more minutes. Was your Father still a coremaker at that point in time?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK, he stayed on as a . . .

DS: And you know what, maybe you could put it down—my Mother was a cigar maker.

DC: That's what I was going to ask you next. I wondered what your Mother was doing.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: A cigar maker, OK.

DS: Can you imagine working in a factory, yeah, making cigars, back then? I mean, it's so, so interesting. Kim, you know, my son's wife's name is Kim, and she wanted all this information, so she's got all these pictures and then she's got a heading under each one, you know.

DC: Really? I'd like to talk to her and see some of these pictures sometime!

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Do you remember your Mom talking at all about her work as a cigar maker?

DS: No. No, I don't remember. After awhile she got arthritis in her knees and she sat on a rocking chair, you know, so—at that time you don't, you didn't have those other—what you move around with, you know. What do you call them? Come on! [laughs] Let's not get off the subject.

DC: A wheelchair.

DS: Wheelchair! Yeah, yeah.

DC: No, that's on the subject. But she went off, it sounds like for quite some time, to the cigar factory.

DS: Yeah. Right.

DC: And who looked after you when your Dad was at work and your Mom was at the cigar factory?

DS: Well, I think, she did that before she was married, you know, was a cigar maker.

DC: Ohhh. OK, yeah.

DS: Yeah. And once she got married, well then, you know, she stayed at home and watched us. Yeah.

DC: She stayed home at that point. OK. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DS: Yeah. I had two brothers and one sister.

DC: OK. And where did you fit in? Where were you in that?

DS: My sister, and then I came next, and then my two brothers after me.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah, so I must've been the second one.

DC: The second one.

DS: And then, there was a brother in between that died when that diphtheria, that—whatever they called it, you know. It was like a . . .

DC: Influenza, maybe?

DS: Pardon?

DC: Influenza?

DS: Yeah. Yeah. So, they called them diphtheria. So he was nine months old when he died. So then, my brother and I went to Northeastern High School. That's on [name of street?] and—whatever—still on the East Side, you know.

DC: OK.

DS: Northeastern High. Yeah.

DC: When you moved in to this new neighborhood, can you remember, you know, who your neighbors were?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: Where had they come from and what did they do? Do you have any memories of that?

DS: Um, yeah—my girlfriend Grace—she's still living—her Mother and Dad—they called them—I think they were half German and half English, you know. And anyway, you should mention that because when I was growing up, Grace's Father would kiss her Mother on the neck, you know, and I thought, oh, when I get married, I want a husband like that! [laughs] But I didn't do so good. I married somebody that wasn't ready for marriage.

DC: When did you get married?

DS: 1937.

DC: OK. So you were pretty young. Let's see—did you graduate from high school?

DS: Did I?

DC: Yeah.

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. So what did you do when you graduated from high school?

DS: I took a business course and I took typing and shorthand, and then the jobs—you couldn't—you couldn't find a job in the office, you know, after having all this training, you know. So then I went to work in the factory. Plymouth Motor on Lynch Road. You know what they have there now? They have all the things that they have for the Thanksgiving Parade. Because I went there once on some kind of an outing for the—with the seniors.

And I said, "Oh my God, this is where I used to work, you know!" And what were we paid? [pause] Oh, before—during my younger days, I worked in a five and ten cent store, for thirty-five cents an hour. And then when I—it was for Easter, so we were selling all this candy, you know. So then when I came home, I was crawling on my knees. I don't know, I'll tell you that I was, but my Mother said, "You see why you have to get an education. Because you don't want to work for thirty-five cents an hour," you know, so anyway, that's why I finished high school. I was—my sister had to go to work because—I guess the family needed money. So she went to work, you know. My sister did. But I—I went to the dime store, you know. During school hours, I think, that's when I went.

DC: Did you miss school to work?

DS: Oh no, they—you know, after school.

DC: After school.

DS: Or either on Saturday or Sunday.

DC: How old were you when you worked at the five and ten cent store?

DS: I must've been about—eighteen years old. Or maybe seventeen or something. Yeah, before I, you know, graduated from high school. Because then, after that, like I say, I couldn't get an office job so then I went to work in the factory at Plymouth Motor.

DC: Did your Father support you finishing high school as well?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: How did your family do in the Depression years?

DS: Oh, that's another thing. I think very bad—maybe that's why my sister had to go to work, because I remember he had money in the bank, and the banks closed. Yeah. Yeah. So what year was that?

DC: 1929? 1930? Right.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: So how did your family get by?

DS: I guess with my sister working. And then, since my Father worked at Ford's, they—he used to go to the store there, and they would bring back, like a three-pound jar of jelly, you know, strawberry jelly—I remember that. [laughs] So anyway, I think that they—you know, they—because the banks were closed, you didn't have any money. So maybe that was his way of, you know, feeding us. But I never went hungry, that's for sure. Yeah.

DC: OK. Did your Mother ever go back to work during the Depression years?

DS: No. No.

DC: No, she didn't. OK.

DS: Yeah. Because my aunt lived the next street over. That was her sister, you know, so they had a lot in common. We used to—we used to go back and forth and—I have to tell you this—my cousin—that's my Mother's sister—yeah, she had—he came from Lithuania, the husband, you know, my Mother's sister's husband. And this is the toys we had, you know, we put the ironing board down, my cousin and I, and he was—he was a boy, you know, so he put the ironing board down and that was our slide. And we had so much fun [laughs]. You know, you had to make use, you know. And for Christmas, God, if you got a pair of roller skates, you know, that was it, you know. Maybe an orange and an apple, you know, that was—when we lived like that, you didn't know any better and you thought this was wonderful, you know. Oh! And when I was younger, too, I used to—my brother and I used to peddle papers. You know, so—I don't know how much was the paper, but during the winter months when it was cold, my brother and I, then we'd stop at this, uh, candy store and we'd have ice cream, you know. [laughs] And I told my brother, "Don't tell the rest of the . . ."—you know, we spent our money for an ice cream, you know. But anyway, I had a very nice childhood.

DC: How old were you when you were selling these papers?

DS: Oh, maybe—twelve, or even ten. Yeah, yeah. We'd have a little red wagon. We put the papers in there and we'd peddle it to certain customers, you know. [referring to the tape] Hey, I would like that—I'd like a copy of . . .

DC: Oh, absolutely! Sure, you're very welcome to that. Yeah.

DS: God, I haven't gone back for so long. Yeah. So that was that. Oh, and then—let's see, what else can I tell you? Well, ask me something.

DC: Well, you're doing fine, because a lot of the things that you're talking about are on my list of questions, but I hardly ever ask them in any order. Do you remember anything more about your job in the five and ten cent store? I know you said you only got thirty-five cents an hour, but do you remember how you liked the job?

DS: It was fast and furious because a lot of people would buy candy for the Easter baskets, you know. So, I guess—well, there was no union or nothing at that time for thirty-five cents, you know. So anyway.

DC: Yeah. Well, let's see . . .

DS: And that was downtown on Woodward, you know, where everything was nice. J. L Hudson's was still there and . . .

DC: What was the store you were working in? What was it called?

DS: Kresge's.

DC: Oh, it was Kresge's, OK. Yeah, sure. Pretty famous name. [laughs] OK. Do you remember things that you did as a family at all, growing up?

DS: Oh yeah. We used to go—every Sunday we'd go to a picnic. I guess—I forget what the name of the picnic was, you know, but then they had a gazebo where they had an orchestra and we used to dance, you know. Yeah, so . . .

DC: This is every Sunday from—or for a long time?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah, that was it, and then, you know, they'd bring the food, you know. And I remember dancing and . . .

DC: Was it a special group? Do you remember . . .

DS: No, we'd just go to the picnic then, and whoever came, you know, would . . .

DC: OK. I didn't know if it was a picnic that was, say, for people of Polish ancestry or a church-related picnic.

DS: Yeah. No, just a regular picnic.

DC: Do you remember where that was?

DS: Pardon?

DC: Do you remember where?

DS: Yeah. Everything was on the East Side, you know. Well, if I told you in Polish—[laughs] It was called [says the Polish name]. So, I don't know what [Polish word] means. [laughs]

DC: But it sounds like it was a Polish place, anyway.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Picnic, yeah.

DC: Were most of the people there Polish?

DS: Yeah. Yeah, because then they danced the polkas, you know, and all that. Yeah. We had a lot of fun. And my girlfriend Grace would go, you know, she'd be there, and my sister, you know, and some of the guys would ask us to dance, so we didn't care. But I did a lot of dancing in my—before, you know. That's where I met my husband, because I went on—Gratiot, no Gratiot and—Gratiot and—I know the words. Oh God, come on Dorothy,

think! Eight Mile Road and Gratiot—they used to have—what was the name of that place, we used to go there. My—my other friend and I—and that's where I met my husband. What was the name of that? After you leave, I'll . . .

DC: Don't worry about it, that's OK. That happens to me all the time, as well. What—well, you met your husband. What was he doing at the time?

DS: Who?

DC: The man who became your husband. You said you met him at the . . .

DS: He wasn't doing anything, I mean, and so I told him to come to Plymouth Motor. Because I got hired in, so I told him to come down there and he got hired in, so we both worked at Plymouth, you know, so—yeah.

DC: OK. Well, before we get to that, tell me a bit more about these business courses you took. When you graduated from high school you said you took some business courses, or typing courses and all that.

DS: Oh yeah, but that wasn't until I was fifty though.

DC: Oh, that was later!

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Oh, OK. I thought you said you did something like that after you graduated from high school.

DS: No, no because I—see, I couldn't get an office job.

DC: I misunderstood. OK. All right. So how long was it after you graduated from high school that you got the job at Plymouth Motors?

DS: Right away!

DC: Right away.

DS: Yeah.

DC: OK, all right. So they . . .

DS: Oh, another thing—I, you know, we went for interview and my Mother said, "Keep going every day. They'll get tired of seeing you." So I went every day until they hired me. [laughs]

DC: Tell me what that was like. Who did you talk to? Who did you see?

DS: When?

DC: When you went every day. You said you went every day.

DS: Yeah, and you know, Lynch Road was quite a ways from where we lived, you know—but you had to walk, you know, you had no choice, you know. So you just went and waited in line and they knew that you want—you know, there was no filling out, no application or nothing. They just hired you from—because you were there, you know. So yeah.

DC: Did they say that they were hiring women?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. And what kinds of jobs were they hiring women for?

DS: Uh, oh that's right—what year—what could that be? '37? Yeah. There was a '37 Plymouth—oh my God, how could I describe it? Where the lights went—where the lights went—well anyway, we had steel wool and we had to shine up this piece of—instrument that looked like, like so. Wait a minute. Like so. Like that, like that, and then it came to a peak. And we had to take the steel wool and shine it up so it could be painted. Well, with the flat, flat—it's not flat paint, but then the regular shiny stuff that the cars are, you know. So that's what I worked on. And then there were—there were, like wheels that was hanging on a—what would you call those things?

DC: Hmm, let's see. Were they going by you?

DS: Yes, yeah.

DC: Like some kind of belt or conveyor.

DS: Right, right. And they were spraying it with, with a whatchamacallit. I remember that.

DC: So women did the spraying?

DS: Yeah. Yes.

DC: Were there any men doing those jobs, too?

DS: Men, no, men were doing those.

DC: Men did the spraying jobs. How about the steel wool jobs? Was that just women or were there men doing that as well?

DS: Uh—mostly women. Yeah, yeah. And then, when I first went there—oh, probably it's something that belongs in the car with a hump. I don't know what that was, you know.

And, oh my God, yeah. That was another thing. All those little things that come on the end of the wire, you know, like—how could I describe them?—anyway, we had to be on this job for six months. Because it had, it was acid—acid—so we had to put apron and gloves and everything. Then we would take this bunch of wires and we would dip this, you know, it—it was set up so it wouldn't splash all over women. So we'd take this bunch of wires and we're dipping, dip this in this acid, and then shake it off, you know, Because then you—it was hot, you know, and then—I remember. So, you were only allowed six months on that job because that was a—some kind of a [pop?]—I forget the name of the [pop?]. But most of all, I started to say that I worked on this big thing and it had a hump on it, so it must've been something like in the front of the car. And then we would put strips of felt all around this thing, you know, so. So I had a lot of jobs, now that I think of it! Oh, and we had women supervisors, you know, so that was very nice. Yeah.

DC: OK, yeah. How did the supervisor—let's see, you had women supervisors. For the workers, were they mostly young women, older women, was there a mixture?

DS: Yeah, like a mixture, yeah. And it was very nice. We got breaks, you know. And—and we'd work right next to each other, so that was nice, you know. You got to know the women, you know, and their name, you know.

DC: Were you able to talk with each other while you were working?

DS: Yeah, yeah. And the supervisors were nice, too. They weren't, you know, they weren't pushing you or anything else, yeah, so. Yeah, so. In fact, I even worked there after I got married, because I remember being pregnant and then I had to go up in the restroom and rest a little bit. [laughs]

DC: Were you allowed to do that?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. It's probably after the union came in, you know.

DC: When did the union come in?

DS: Must've been in '39 or something, yeah.

DC: Sounds about right. When were you pregnant? Maybe we can . . .

DS: Yeah, that's right, that's the way. [laughs]

DC: Should be able to figure that one out.

DS: Yeah, and you know, they sat—some of the men sat in the factory because they didn't settle, settle the—it was a strike, you know, there was a strike. So people were bringing—I didn't, because I was a woman, I didn't—but the men did—but we had to bring them something to eat, you know, in the factory, you know. So that was kind of a historical thing. [laughs]

DC: Sure. Well, let's talk more about that. Were you aware of the organizing movement, the union movement, in the plant?

DS: Yeah, I—I could tell you I was pissed off because I didn't like my five dollars taken out of my pay. [laughs] I shouldn't say that.

DC: Sure, yeah, yeah. Right.

DS: I shouldn't say that.

DC: No, that's OK. That's how you felt.

DS: No, I resented it. But I mean after awhile, you know, I didn't because then they—they were more—you didn't have to work that fast or anything; they timed, you know, they had timekeepers, you know, and things like that. So that worked out OK. But anyway, I guess we needed the money when I first got married and I was pregnant already, so I kind of resented that five dollars they were taking out of my pay.

DC: Sure. Were you able to keep working while you were pregnant?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Because the women there even threw me a little baby shower. [laughs]

DC: Oh, that's nice of them.

DS: Right, right.

DC: How about other women in your department? How did they feel about the union coming in?

DS: Some of them liked it and some of them didn't, you know. It all depends on how hard your job was, you know. Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. So which people wanted the union to come in? Which jobs were hard?

DS: Uh—maybe, like working on the press. I was never, you know, because—you know, you—I don't know, that was too scary. You know, I mean—it was better that you worked with wires or things like that, you know, so yeah.

DC: Did you consider your job easier, then, than the presses?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Even dipping the acid and all that?

DS: [laughs] That's right. Those little—oh, it almost came to me, those little—the things that

are end of the wire, you know, they're little—oh, that would hook onto something, you know.

DC: Yeah, I can picture what you're saying.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: But I don't know the—I'm grasping in vain for the name.

DS: Right.

DC: How many people worked at Plymouth Motors back then? Do you have any idea?

DS: Oh God, no. I don't know, but . . .

DC: How about in your department?

DS: At least forty.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. And so it sounds like when there was the sit-down strike, then you at least got involved in bringing food to these people. Is that right?

DS: Yeah. Right, right.

DC: So why did you decide to do that?

DS: Well, because they couldn't come out. They didn't want to come out, because they wanted the strike to be settled, you know, and the longer they sat in there, the quicker the people would settle the strike.

DC: Sure. But at that point, you weren't sure if you even wanted a union, so I'm just curious to know why you decided to help out the people in the plant.

DS: Well, they were doing a good thing, you know. I mean, they were taking a stand, you know. So—they wanted the union to come in there and make things easier. Probably for the men, you know, where they—where the thing—where the lines were going too fast or something, you know, so . . .

DC: Was your husband involved at all in the organizing campaign?

DS: [pause, then softly] No, I think we—I'm trying to think if the strike was settled already by the time—no, I don't remember.

DC: OK. I think you said you got married in 1937.

DS: Mm-hmm.

DC: OK so, and then—was he working at the Plymouth plant at that point?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. So he would've been—did he continue to work at the Plymouth plant?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK. So he would've been there, but you don't remember what his position was?

DS: [pause] Just a common worker. [Laughs]

DC: OK. Just a common worker. But I guess I meant his attitude about the union coming in. You know, did he . . .

DS: No, he felt OK with that.

DC: He felt OK with that.

DS: Yeah.

DC: Did he sit in, in the plant?

DS: Yeah.

DC: He did. OK. So he was one of those in there that you would take food to?

DS: Right, right.

DC: OK. All right. Wow. Let's see—this is interesting stuff. When your first child was born, you know, what did you do then? I'm assuming you had to take some time off.

DS: Oh, let me see. That was . . .

DC: When was your first . . .

DS: She was born in '39.

DC: OK.

DS: We used to go to—my sister and I used to go to Belle Isle, and we'd take pictures of the

fountain there, yeah. And—and she was married to her husband. Now she's dying.

DC: Oh, I'm sorry.

DS: And I can't even, you know I can't—I can't [fighting back tears]—well, she—let's see, if I'm 85, she's 88. But—I can't talk to her because she's not right, you know. Sometimes she'll know me and sometimes she won't.

DC: So she's alive but not able to communicate clearly with you?

DS: Yeah, yes. So now, you know, I could say, oh I wish Vern [sp?] was, you know, her normal self because then—so many things come up that—who do you ask? You know? And then my brother had a stroke, so he can't talk. He had a stroke—well it affects the speech, you know, and he's in a nursing home. So there's no one for me to discuss my family, you know, so . . .

DC: Right. It sounds like you were pretty close with your sister, at least, at that point in time.

DS: Yeah.

DC: Did you live near each other?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Everything happened on the East Side except when I got divorced. Then I moved on the West Side. [laughs]

DC: On the West Side, OK.

DS: In fact, all my relatives still live on the East Side, you know. Used to be Harper and Van Dyke when we used to walk, you know, to—on Harper and Van Dyke when I was still single, you know.

DC: So when your daughter was born, did you have to leave your job for awhile?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: All right. And how did that go? What did you—how was it, caring for this young child?

DS: Um, you know, then we—because I didn't have much seniority, then they laid us off, you know. So—let's see, in fourteen— '41 my son was born and I went to work at Dodge's, now.

DC: OK, all right. So did you—did you work at all between the time that your daughter was born and then your son, a year or two later?

DS: Let's see—'39 and '41, did I—when did I get divorced? [pause] I was married twelve years. '32 . . .

DC: Well then you probably got divorced after the war at some point, if you were married [in '37] . . .

DS: Oh yeah, he went in the service. What time did he go in the service? '40—think he went in, what was it? No, '41 it ended, didn't it?

DC: No, it ended in '45.

DS: '45 it ended?

DC: Yeah.

DS: '41 is when . . .

DC: That would be Pearl Harbor, in December of '41.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Right. Right. Because it was during—now I'm running back and forth!

DC: That's OK, that's all right. That's the way we figure things out.

DS: When the war was on, we had to keep the lights down low, so my husband was a—come on Dorothy, what was he?—anyway, we got a phone because he was a [pause] . . .

DC: It happens.

DS: Yeah. He—oh God. Not a warden—night warden? No . . . [probably an air raid warden]

DC: Night watchman of some sort?

DS: Yeah, but there was a group of them, that they had to go out and make sure that the lights were out, yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK, for in the neighborhood?

DS: Yeah, right. Right.

DC: I guess today we'd call it a neighborhood watch or something.

DS: Yeah. Right, right. So he had to do that. Maybe—after you're gone, I'll think of what.

DC: I'll give you a call a week from now and we'll see what's come to you. Well, so I guess what I was trying to figure out is, you know, what you did between the time that your daughter was born in '39 and then you said your son was born in '40 or '41.

DS: '41.

DC: ‘41, OK.

DS: Oh, I—that’s right, I went to work during the war.

DC: During the war, OK.

DS: Yeah.

DC: All right.

DS: Oh my God, yeah, that was still Plymouth. Yeah, and I had to—work midnights.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah.

DC: Do you remember when you went to work, back at Plymouth, when you went back there?

DS: That was—must’ve been between ‘41 and ‘45 because—no, the—no, that wasn’t before, because I was working on pistons. Whatever pistons are! [laughs] They’re nice and shiny. And I—I had to take this gauge, and the pistons had grooves in it, you know, so I had to put this, whatever it was, through the groove to see that there were no, uh, little spots in there, because then the men were inspector on the other side, and they would take whatever—because my little instrument wouldn’t go all around like it was supposed to. Then the men would have to take a file or something and file in between there, whatever it was. So anyway, I was working midnights. That must’ve been after the two kids, because my grandmother was watching my kids. Yeah.

DC: OK. There we go. That’s how we pin it down. OK.

DS: I lived upstairs and she lived downstairs, my grandmother. And she would watch the two children when I went to work midnights. And that’s right—we were saving for a house, my husband and I. And . . .

DC: Was he off in the service at that point in time?

DS: [pause] I think he must have been. Yeah. Because—now I threw those letters away, too. You know, the ones that he wrote to me in the service, you know.

DC: Ah, that’s too bad.

DS: So anyway, we used to roll these pistons, and they were real shiny. And around—we started at 11 to 7, so that must’ve been about 3:00. My head would go down and the inspectors, you know, that would repair these pistons, they would laugh because they would see my head go down. God, I wonder how much money I made. Because I was

going to find this thing for you. Then after—after I divorced my husband, I was fifty years old, I went back to school for a whole year, downtown. Business—school of business. And I, naturally I took the streetcar. I didn't have a car at that time, and I went—that was when I was fifty.

DC: So that would've been in the 1960s then. That would've been quite a bit later.

DS: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. Well, let's stay in World War II for a . . .

DS: Wait a minute. I got to get a pen for your paper, and . . .

DC: OK.

DS: What year was it? [pause] Now there's—this thing is running and . . .

DC: That's OK. I have lots of tape. We can let it run.

DS: When I was—when I would be fifty—what year would that be?

DC: If you were born in 1917, then that would be 1967.

DS: '67?

DC: 1967. And you said you were married for twelve years.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So that means you would've gotten divorced in 1949.

DS: OK. You're right.

DC: Does that sound right? 1949?

DS: Yeah. All right.

DC: So there was a significant gap between the time you got divorced and the time you went to business school.

DS: Uh-huh.

DC: Well we'll talk about what you did during that time a bit later, if you're willing to put up with me that long. But I'm really curious to know more about what you did during the war. You had two young children, OK. And your grandmother looked after them at night. Who looked after them during the day?

DS: I did.

DC: You did.

DS: Yeah.

DC: So did you ever sleep?

DS: Let's see, they couldn't have been gone to school.

DC: No, they were too young.

DS: Yeah.

DC: At least in the early part of the war. Your daughter could've ended up in school by the end of the war.

DS: Yeah, yeah. [pause] Oh, I know—I went—can't figure that out. I went and my grandmother [Wattle?] was watching. Because I would go to bed when I come home from work. And then 3:00, I'd run downstairs and pick the kids up.

DC: OK, so she took care of them downstairs while you slept in the morning.

DS: Right, right. Yeah.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah, so where were they during the night?

DC: Did they stay at your grandmother's? You said that she was below you . . .

DS: Maybe—who would watch them during the night? Huh. [pause] I have no idea. Not my husband—was at—no. No, because he was in the service, right? Oh, I know! Oh, no, that was—I know I had my cousin—my cousin watching them. No, that was when I worked at Dodge. [laughs]

DC: Oh well, it gets a little bit confusing. But it sounds like you had support from your grandmother, anyway. She helped take care of your kids.

DS: Yeah. Right.

DC: And you were working midnights, and you were awfully tired, it sounds like.

DS: Yeah, right. Yeah.

DC: And your husband was apparently in the service. Do you remember what branch of the service he was in?

DS: Navy.

DC: In the Navy, OK.

DS: Yeah.

DC: All right. Do you know if he went into the Navy before or after Pearl Harbor?

DS: Um—almost when it was ending, because he was this—*air* warden! That's what he was, an *air warden*.

DC: OK. All right, he was an air warden. So he didn't enter the Navy until the war was nearly over?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Oh, OK. All right. So was he . . .

DS: And I used to get, what, fifteen dollars a month from him when he was in the service.

DC: OK, when he was in the service.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: All right. So let's see, then you started working with the pistons, you know, or on the pistons back at the Plymouth plant. All right, this is during the war. Right?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. And in your department, once again, was it mostly women doing that job? Or was there a mixture . . .

DS: No, both, both women and men. Yeah, because the inspectors were men, you know.

DC: OK. Inspectors were men, all right.

DS: And then I remember during the war we used to work on some kind of crankshaft, which was really, really heavy. I don't know what I did with them, but—oh, no, during the war I worked at a little—oh my God—looked something like this during the war and it was for a gun. Yeah, and it was real oily. Yeah.

DC: Something for a gun, OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Some kind of gun, you know, so God knows what kind of gun. And there's nobody I can ask.

DC: Well, there are ways to find out. You worked on gun parts and pistons, which presumably were not for guns but something else.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. How did you like that work?

DS: [short pause] I liked it. I liked it. Yeah, yeah. Because it was small parts, you know. I don't even remember what we did with the small part, but I know it was for a gun during the war, you know. So that must've been when my husband—you can go back [laughs] . . .

DC: That's OK, that's the way it works. Yeah. OK. So it sounds like your husband was around, at least for the first part of the war.

DS: Yeah.

DC: And then where was he working? He was an air warden, but he must've been doing something else.

DS: Yeah, probably still at Plymouth.

DC: Still at Plymouth as well. All right.

DS: Yeah. Too bad he's dead. I could ask him. [laughs] Too bad we didn't get together earlier!

DC: Well, that's the way it goes. I hear that so much. Yeah. All right, well what else can you remember about World War II? Either work or your family, what else was . . .

DS: I know the food was very—but I was working for—yeah, that's right because David was just a little baby. I used to take him—it was a grocery store on the corner and—that must've been when my husband was in the service, also. And she wanted me to clean her house. So I brought the baby with me to her house, but she was really good to me because she used to give me bacon and butter and things like that, so I didn't mind working for her.

DC: OK, all right.

DS: Especially, so—I don't know who watched the other daughter, but anyway I remember taking the baby there and he would, you know, he would give me meat on the side because everything was rationed, you know, so—yeah, even—I remember cigarettes were twenty-five cents a pack.

DC: A lot of money back then.

DS: I didn't smoke, you know, but I had three—maybe my husband smoked. Twenty-five cents a pack! And what are they now? Five dollars and [laughs] . . .

DC: Yeah. Oh boy. All right, so did you work at Plymouth for the whole war, do you remember? Were you there the whole—during the whole war?

DS: Well after my husband came back, then I probably was laid off or something. Yeah.

DC: OK, all right. Let's talk a bit about that. Let's see—try and remember—there's so many questions to ask. During the war, did you ever consider quitting your job, while you were working during the war? It sounds like you were awfully tired. I wondered if you . . .

DS: Yeah. Oh no, no.

DC: OK, well why not? Why did you stay on the job?

DS: Because it's a—you know, you were helping out, you know, with the—probably needed the money, also, you know. Yeah—yeah, that's probably why I went to work for this woman. Maybe I was laid off at the time. You know, because that was good because then you would get compensation. They don't call it compensation now. They—worker's comp, that's what they used to call it.

DC: So, did you get laid off at all during the war, while the war was still going on?

DS: Not during the war, no.

DC: OK. That would be after.

DS: Yeah.

DC: OK. So, let's see. Did you do any other jobs in the factory during the war? You mentioned the pistons and you mentioned the little gun parts—maybe the crankshaft, but . . .

DS: Yeah. Right, right.

DC: OK, how did you like that job, the crankshaft job?

DS: It was very heavy. You know, because—I don't know, but I mean, I remember it was very, very heavy, you know. But then, if you wanted to work, you wanted the money, you worked. Yeah, so.

DC: How did you get along with your supervisors during those years?

DS: Oh, funny you should mention that, because I don't know what job that was. [laughs] I spoke *up* that time, because we were—we were facing some kind of wall or something, and I said, "Why do we have to face this wall?" I mean, you know, I mean working is bad enough, so finally he moved us someplace else. But that was the first time, because—I keep things inside, I don't express. I mean, I don't like to fight, you know. I think I fought enough with my husband, so I didn't want—but that I remember, that we were placed against a wall and I didn't like that.

DC: Were you just facing right up against the wall, and so that's all you could see?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK.

DS: So anyway, he changed us and then he was all right after that.

DC: Did your coworkers along there feel the same way as you?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Now did you use your union . . .

End of Tape I, Side A

Begin Tape I, Side B

DC: . . .so you said that you think you did use the union then to try to get away from the wall?

DS: Yeah. Right, right, yeah. And they—like, my son-in-law, well he's retired now, and he says the union didn't do anything for you. I mean, they're going down and down. But at that time, they really worked for you, so you didn't have to be scared that you would going to be fired or something, because you had the union working for you, so.

DC: Can you remember any other instances when you used the union or benefited from their presence?

DS: No, just that one time.

DC: Just the one time, OK.

DS: One time, yeah. Yeah.

DC: Did you have a committee person or a steward?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: How did you decide who that person would be?

DS: Uh—because even the foreman was a union representative, you know? Yeah, so—yeah, so that was good.

DC: Did you have any women supervisors at that point?

DS: Women?

DC: Yeah.

DS: Yeah.

DC: You did? Supervisors?

DS: Oh yeah.

DC: Oh really? OK. How were they to work for?

DS: Very good. You know, if you did your job and you didn't, you know, screw around, they didn't pick on you, you know. Isn't that funny you should ask, because this one woman that sat like two, two women away from me, she never talked to anybody. And then I heard that there was a fire and five of her children were burned. And I thought, oh my God, how could she even *work*? You know, I mean—but some things stick in your mind where other things don't, you know.

DC: So you would've thought that she just kept to herself without knowing . . .

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. But that was the word that went around, that five of her children were burned. I said oh my God, I don't think I could live with that.

DC: Can you remember—you know, this is a real big generalization, but were there any differences, in general, between women supervisors and men supervisors?

DS: No, no. No. Because I used to know a gal, that her husband was a supervisor. You know, and they were—they—there was no squabbles or anything else, you know. I think they just accepted it, you know, and—yeah, in this day and age it probably, [laughs] probably—you know, like now, you know, I mean women would have to get up in the world before they were equal to men, but I think people were more, I would say, easier to get along with. There was no prejudice, you know, like it is now. You know, so—maybe that's why.

DC: Were there any blacks in your department?

DS: No.

DC: No, OK. So maybe no prejudice towards women at that point in time . . .

DS: Yeah. Right, right.

DC: How about your union representatives? Were they women?

DS: No, they were all men.

DC: They were all men.

DS: Yeah.

DC: OK. Now did you elect your union representatives?

DS: Did I what?

DC: Did you vote on your union representatives?

DS: I think so. Yeah, because some men were better than others. They stuck up for you more, you know, so.

DC: Were there a lot of women working in the plant?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah. And especially during the war. Their husbands were probably in the service, too, you know.

DC: Were a lot of these married women in the plant?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. Were there any times when you wanted to move to a different job?

DS: No, no. I—I must've been money hungry or something! [laughs] No, no—well, you know, with that—cedar pop—no—I don't know, what that pop. You know, you were—you were, only had to work the six months, because . . .

DC: Oh, with the acid.

DS: Yes. Solder pop! That's what it was. Solder.

DC: Solder pop, OK. All right.

DS: And it would put solder on these little doohickeys at the end of the wire.

DC: Sure. Yeah. Do you remember, uh, were any of those jobs difficult to learn how to do?

DS: No, they were, they were quite simple. Yeah, yeah.

DC: Who taught you how to do them?

DS: The supervisor, you know, when you first came in, you know. God, when I was, what, eighteen, you know—I guess I was the youngest one there—where we put these—this felt pieces over these—this hump on the car, you know. So that was—what year was that? '30- . . .

DC: '35?

DS: Yeah, yeah. No, that was—only jobs I wouldn't want would be the press, you know. That was—and I never was put on one, so that was all right. Yeah.

DC: But it sounds like some women were working on the press.

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DC: Wow.

DS: God, you bring back so much mem—so many memories. It's like talking to my family!

DC: Oh, I'm glad, I think! Do you remember having lunch breaks or anything like that when you were working?

DS: What time is it?

DC: A little after 11:00. Do you have to go somewhere?

DS: No, no, not till 1:00, so that's all right. Yeah.

DC: OK, we'll be good then. I'll be too tired to talk anymore by then.

DS: Yeah, we had breaks, ten-minute breaks—of course our supervisor was good, so we took twenty minutes. And it wasn't too—wasn't too hot in the factories, now that I recollect, you know. So, there was a nice—we had restrooms that we went, and there was benches, you know, that—I remember I was so tired when I was pregnant, I laid on this bench and I was shocked when I was able to fall asleep.

DC: Oh wow, in the plant!

DS: Yeah, in the plant. Yeah.

DC: Did you get in trouble for that?

DS: No, no. Because everybody, you know, used to kind of doze off, you know. It all depends on what shift you worked, you know, so.

DC: So what would happen if, like if someone down a few places from you started to doze off, what would you do?

DS: When I would doze off?

DC: Well, you know, you said that some people would kind of doze off . . .

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: . . .and you were on the verge of falling asleep. Would you cover for each other?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Or we would say, "Come on, it's time to go," you know, or whatever.

DC: Try to rev them back up again.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: All right.

DS: Yeah, I never minded working in a factory, and I wasn't ashamed of working in a factory, you know, even though I had the schooling for business, you know, but . . .

DC: Did you ever do things with your fellow workers outside of the workplace?

DS: No, I don't think so—mostly, mostly family. Yeah.

DC: Mostly family, all right. Did any of your fellow workers live near you?

DS: No, I don't think so. Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK.

DS: In '41—was it '41? We bought a new car. And—what was I going to say? [laughs]

DC: Well maybe you traveled some.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: It would've been hard to get gas, during the war.

DS: Oh it was stolen. It was stolen back then in '41! Can you imagine a brand new car?

DC: Did you have insurance for it?

DS: Yeah, I guess we did, because—must've been after my husband came back from the service that we bought the car. Was it '41?

DC: That would be '45 or so.

DS: Oh, '45?

DC: Yeah.

DS: Oh . . .

DC: Or '46.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it wasn't before the war. It must have been afterwards.

DC: After the war. OK, yeah.

DS: Yeah. So anyway, I thought that that day and age, it was very rare, you know, but we got a new car, in fact, so it was all right.

DC: Now if you can remember back to near the end of the war . . .

DS: V—V-day . . .

DC: Yeah, V-E day, V-J day. What was that like?

DS: Oh it was wonderful. Yeah, it was wonderful. Yeah. And some of the—sometimes on the TV they showed those pictures where the sailors were kissing their wives, yeah. And I remember—him taking off for some—couldn't have been a ship. Where would there be a ship? I know he was in Bremerton, Washington. I remember that. Too bad I threw those air mail letters away. [Laughs.] No it was really, really celebration. Just like the hockey game [referring to recent Detroit Red Wings Stanley Cup victory] we're celebrating, that's how they were celebrating. Yeah.

DC: Sure. Now, were you worried at all about your job at that point in time? [short pause] Let me ask it a different way. Did you want to keep on working at that point in time, at the end of the war?

DS: After the war . . .

DC: At the end of the war.

DS: Yeah, yeah. I probably did, yeah. And then they probably switched to—to the cars already, you know.

DC: Do you remember what you were making during the war, what the plant was producing?

DS: You know, funny you should say that, because I found a—after [age] fifty I—after fifty, this was not, you know—after fifty I got a job working for the state.

DC: Oh, OK.

DS: Yeah. At that time I was making six dollars an hour. I found my pay stub—[coughing] after I went to school, you know, for a year—well, I was divorced at that time and I had three kids to raise, so . . .

DC: OK, well let me get back to this period. I'm trying to think—I'm trying to zero in on the end of the war here.

DS: The end of the war?

DC: The end of the war, yeah. And if I heard you right, you said you wanted to keep on working. Were you hoping to keep on working at the Plymouth plant?

DS: I think I went to Dodge's at that time.

DC: Dodge's at that time.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Well what happened at the—when the war was over, what happened at the Plymouth plant? I mean, were there changes at the Plymouth plant when the war ended?

DS: Hmm. They went back to making cars.

DC: OK, went back to making cars.

DS: Yeah.

DC: And how about the work force? You said there were a lot of women working there during the war. Were there a lot of women working there after the war?

DS: I'm trying to think, what department did we go to? Maybe it was then when we worked on the pistons?

DC: I don't know. It could be.

DS: [Laughs.]

DC: Yeah. Yeah. But did you keep on . . .

DS: [confidently] Yeah, because—that's right, because before it was the—that side that had held the headlight. So it must've went back to the car production then. So—off and on, I worked quite a bit, because I could almost collect—when I turned sixty-two, I could almost collect something, working for—Plymouth and Dodge's were the same thing, yeah. I didn't work enough years to collect any . . .

DC: A pension?

DS: Benefits. Yeah, yeah.

DC: You said you worked off and on. Why did you work off and on?

DS: Probably because I was laid off.

DC: Laid off, OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: Did you get laid off when the war ended?

DS: Yeah, probably. Yeah, till they switched back. Yeah, because then they didn't need the, you know, the gun things. So that it was quite a spell before they turned the factory over to the cars, you know.

DC: OK. What did you do during that time?

DS: Probably lived the life of Riley. [laughs] And went places, like Belle Isle and things like that. Yeah, so . . .

DC: Did you have some money saved up to do that?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, because we were saving for a home, you know. Yeah, but that fell through.

DC: Why did that fall through?

DS: Because my husband was stupid. [laughs]

DC: What did he do?

DS: He said, "Wait till all the people that came here to work during the war will go back—things will be cheaper." So I listened to him. Who was I? I was only twenty-something. [laughs] So anyway . . .

DC: So you had a chance—did you have a chance to buy a particular house?

DS: Yeah, we had—we put five hundred dollars down, you know, on it. And then he said, no, you know—he changed his mind, so.

DC: Yeah. When did he come back from the Navy?

DS: Probably—after the V-J.

DC: OK. Did he ever go overseas?

DS: Yeah, he went to Japan.

DC: He did, OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah. So.

DC: OK, so then he came back some time after that.

DS: Yeah. Right.

DC: What was it like when he came back?

DS: [pause] Relationship?

DC: Sure.

DS: [Laughs, but not in a funny way.]

DC: Well you can talk about that if you want. Were you happy to see him come back?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was later that I found out that he had women over there. [Laughs]

DC: Oh really. In Japan?

DS: No, Washington. Yeah.

DC: OK, I see. All right.

DS: That wasn't a happy thing.

DC: Yeah, I guess not. What did he do when he came back to Detroit?

DS: [short pause] I guess he kept on working, because they ended up on 8 Mile Road and—8 Mile Road and something. It was a plant there, and it was a Chrysler plant. So he went there and he was a foreman there.

DC: He was a foreman, OK.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Had he been a foreman before he left?

DS: No. No.

DC: No, he came back and became a foreman.

DS: When he came back. Yeah.

DC: How did he get the foreman job?

DS: [pause] I really don't know. Yeah, yeah.

DC: And then, I'm again wondering what you did during those years. You think you got laid off, and you said you lived the life of Riley for awhile.

DS: [Laughs] Right.

DC: But can you remember more about that period? Did you go back to work at Plymouth some more? Or did you go to Dodge? Can you remember anything about that?

DS: [pause] I wonder what year I went back to Dodge's? I can't—oh, I know when I went back. That's when I moved here already, on the West Side. Right, because I was—when did you say I got divorced?

DC: 1949.

DS: '40-what?

DC: 1949. 1949. You said you were married for twelve years.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So that you would've gotten divorced, in that case, around 1949.

DS: So that's when I moved. [pause] Oh, then I got—yeah, I got the divorce in '49. And I know I wasn't working in '49. Oh, that's right. And then I moved here on the West Side. And then the expressway came through, so I had to move.

DC: Oh, you had to move because of the expressway.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. And then I went to Herman Gardens. [On Tireman Street, west of Greenfield, in Detroit, northwest of Dearborn] And that's a—project? I think so. It was

very nice then, but it sure isn't now. Yeah, that time—what was that? Where was Herman Gardens? On Southfield? Come on, come on Dorothy. No, I can picture it but I don't know where it is.

DC: OK.

DS: But anyway—then! That's when I went back to work at Dodge's.

DC: At Dodge's, OK, at that point.

DS: Yeah. Because the woman next door watched my kids.

DC: That's after you moved to Herman Gardens?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: That would've been some time in the 1950s, I think.

DS: Right, right. Because—yeah, yeah, 1949. Because Linda was only two years old when I went and moved to Herman Gardens, and that's why the woman next door had to watch her.

DC: OK. And when was Linda born?

DS: '47.

DC: '47, OK. OK. All right. This is working out.

DS: [Laughs.] Right!

DC: We're figuring it out. All right, so when you got your divorce, did you have a job at that point?

DS: No! No, no.

DC: Did you—were you looking for a job at that point?

DS: Well when I moved to Larkins [next to Chadsey High School, in path of future I-94]—where did I meet Lila? Lila, Lila, Lila. Oh, that was at Plymouth. This gal I worked with at Plymouth, her husband was a union representative. Yeah. Right. So *he's* the one that got me the job at Dodge's. Yeah.

DC: Oh, all right. So had you kept in touch with Lila?

DS: Yes, I did. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: All right.

DS: And there was another gal I kept in touch with, Lotty, but she died. I wonder what happened to Lila? She probably died, too. [Laughs.] What was Lila's last name, I wonder? Lila—then I could tell you the supervisor's, not the super—the foreman's . . .

DC: Her husband was a union representative, anyway.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: All right. So he got you in at Dodge—which Dodge plant was this?

DS: Lynch Road . . .

DC: Lynch Road, OK.

DS: No, no, no. That was in Hamtramck, wasn't it? Dodge's was in Hamtramck?

DC: The Dodge Main?

DS: [Confidently.] Yeah, yeah.

DC: You were at the Dodge Main?

DS: Right, right.

DC: OK, all right. All right.

DS: [Laughs.] You're helping me remember.

DC: Well, I'm learning a little bit from talking to people. What did you do at the Dodge Main plant?

DS: [Pause.] Oh, God—hmm—I have no idea.

DC: Can't remember that, OK.

DS: Hmm. God in heaven—couldn't have been very hard because, if he got me the job, I'm sure [Laughs] . . .

DC: Well do you remember if you were working mainly with women, or if you were working with men at that point in time?

DS: [Pause, then not so confidently.] I probably was working with women. Yeah. What was I doing? I remember, this other friend of mine [short pause], we'd run through the plant—don't ask me why [phone ringing] . . .

DC: I'll let you get that . . .

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: . . .You said you had a friend and you'd run through the plant.

DS: Through the plant, and, you know, I held her hand and—I don't know what plant that—maybe even it was Plymouth. And now that I think of it, at the—oh, my God, maybe they thought I was queer, you know, holding her hand and running through the plant, but I, [laughing] I wasn't! You know, but—I got a picture of her, too, down in the basement. That's what made me think, you know, we used to—and she was French, you know, and I just liked her, you know, so whatever!

DC: Sure, yeah. Well you had three kids when you got divorced. One was, what, ten years old, one was about eight, and one was about two.

DS: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

DC: All right. Wow. And did the kids move with you then?

DS: Oh yeah.

DC: And then the expressway bounced you out again.

DS: Right, right.

DC: How did you feel about that?

DS: Well, this man told me temporarily, you know, he can—he can rent to me, but it'll only be temporarily. So then, I said I didn't care because I—oh, I know why, because my grandmother had to sell her house and she sold it to black people. You know, not that I have anything about black people, but they used to have parties—parties down there, you know, and I thought it's time, you know, since my grandmother wasn't there anymore, it was time that I moved, and . . .

DC: Did you live with your grandmother's house for awhile?

DS: Again?

DC: Did you move back to your grandmother's house for awhile, in 1949?

DS: Did I move back . . .

DC: Well, when did your grandmother sell her house?

DS: When did she sell her house?

DC: Yeah.

DS: Probably when Linda was two years old or something. Yeah.

DC: So did you think about moving back to your grandmother's house at that point in time?

DS: No, because she sold it.

DC: She had sold it already, OK. All right, yeah.

DS: Yeah. I remember she had to get rid of her grand piano, and I—we used to have so much fun, you know, playing the rolls, you know, and singing, you know. But whatever.

DC: But anyways, you leased a place from someone else then, at that point in time.

DS: I rented it.

DC: You *rented* it, yeah. Right, yeah.

DS: Yeah.

DC: And then how long did you live there before the expressway?

DS: Not too long, because it seemed like—maybe six months, and that was it. And then I moved to Herman Gardens, and . . .

DC: How were you able to get into Herman Gardens?

DS: [pause] I don't think they had a—like a waiting list or something, you know, at that time. Oh, I—I don't know what makes me think that all the people that they're—maybe because of the people that had a husband in the service or something. Yeah. But still, it was mostly families, so it couldn't have been. Yeah. So I lived in Herman Gardens quite awhile. How many years? God knows. I'd have to ask Kim. [laughs]

DC: Sure. Yeah, she knows more about that. Did you get to know many of your neighbors in Herman Gardens?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. That was, that was nice. The kids went to St. Christopher—oh yeah, that's another thing . . .

DC: Tell me about that.

DS: I went down to St. Christopher school, and when I went to see the pastor, he opened the books and he says, "I don't see any donations from you, so I don't know if I can accept

your kids or not." And I thought, you S.O.B. How could I give donations when I don't—oh, I know things were really rough because my husband wasn't giving me any child support. Oh, this was a terrible time. I had to cash in bottles to get six cents, twelve cents for the streetcars to take me downtown and tell them I needed help, you know. That was a bad time.

DC: Sure. Where did you go downtown to try to get help?

DS: Yeah, yeah. And they . . .

DC: Where did you go, though, downtown? Did you go to the city?

DS: Yeah, someplace where they—like, maybe welfare. I don't know what it was, you know, what it was, but anyway.

DC: Sure. Did they help you?

DS: Yeah, they gave me six dollars. All of six dollars. [laughs]

DC: Just one time, six dollars?

DS: Yeah. Yeah, and they said, "No, you have to get after your husband. You have to go to Friend of the Court," you know.

DC: Oh my. And this was in 1949, 1950?

DS: Yeah! Yeah.

DC: Wow.

DS: So anyway. He wasn't very good at paying child support, you know—at that time it was six dollars a child. What was I getting? Twenty-one dollars a month, for three kids. Twenty-one? No, maybe that was seven dollars. Always remember it was twenty-one dollars. And Herman Gardens, well, you know, that's where you could live for less. I don't know why, but anyway—so then, I lived there quite awhile, and then my daughter got to—able to work. So she must've been eighteen already. Oh my God, Pat.

DC: Let's see, that would've been—she turned eighteen in 1957, I guess it would be.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: '57. So you were there—were you still in Herman Gardens when she turned eighteen?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So you were there for quite some time.

DS: Yeah, yeah. From the time Linda was, well, two, till you know, I don't know how old she was, but anyway. How old—Pat must've been ten or something, so I must've lived there about eight years, didn't I?

DC: Yeah, at least.

DS: And then when she started working, well then I was—over budget or something, you know, when I went to the office and they told me that I had to move because I was making too much money. [laughs] Oh, I *know* I worked at Dodge's at that time. *Yeah*, yeah.

DC: OK, all right. So you were working at Dodge's, and then when Linda went to work, you went over the amount of money you were . . .

DS: When Pat, yeah.

DC: Oh, Pat, I'm sorry.—Pat went to work.

DS: Yeah, that's why I had to move out. So where did I move to? [laughs]

DC: Those must've been tough years for you.

DS: Pardon?

DC: Those must've been tough years for you.

DS: Yeah! I know, that's why I want this taped, so everybody will know. I'm going to write a book!

DC: Absolutely, you should! Yeah, three young children, I can't imagine.

DS: Yeah, yeah. And, oh, you know, when I lived above my grandmother—this is something that should be written down somewhere! She had no hot water. I mean, I—you know, so we had these, what would they call those? They're not steel, they're not tin, they're . . .

DC: Cast iron?

DS: Copper!

DC: Copper kettle?

DS: Yeah. Yeah. Copper—whatever.

DC: A basin, a big old washtub or something.

DS: Yeah. So then, in order to wash clothes, and these were baby diapers—we didn't have

diapers, we had—I mean, we didn't have paper diapers. Anyway, I put this big old thing on two burners of my gas stove. And then I would take the cold water from the sink with the pot and fill this thing with water, till it got hot. And then when it got hot, I had to take it out of the pot and put it in the washing machine, so I would have hot water! You got to put that down somewhere! [laughs]

DC: Yeah, no kidding. Yeah, that's a lot of work!

DS: Oh my *God*, yeah. And we had a—we had a base burner in this—this was the kitchen, and the next thing was the base burner, with eisenhow—eisen—what do they call those little—eisenhow—eisen—something glass. You know, where you could see the flames? You probably . . . [referring to eisenglass, which is the mineral mica, formed into sheets, and used for windows on old stoves]

DC: Well, OK. Well I'm not familiar with the term but I know what you mean. Yeah.

DS: Yeah. Eisenhow—no—not the president Eisenhower, so what else could it be? But I know it was eisel—something. But anyway, I had to go, when my husband—I had to go out to the barn because that's where the coal was. Then you had to go up the stairs and then you had to lift the top of the stove, and then you had to take the pail of coal and put it on the top of the stove. No wonder I had a heart attack!

DC: You had a heart attack?

DS: Oh yeah. [At age] 59.

DC: [Misunderstanding year for age] In '59 you had a heart attack. Wow. OK.

DS: Yeah. Open heart surgery.

DC: Whoa, 1959. Well, you know, you were doing—you're hauling coal while you're also working midnight shifts, right?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Yeah. And you've got two young children at that point.

DS: Right, right.

DC: Oh goodness gracious. Yeah. That's a lot. Was your grandmother able to do many of the household chores?

DS: No, she was . . .

DC: She was in her own place then.

DS: I had an aunt, but that was her daughter. And she had arthritis and she never married. So she had to cook—oh, I remember—what did she have that was so good. I used to come down there—oh, she'd make mashed potatoes and then she had some cucumbers with sour cream and somehow you put the sour cream over the potatoes. Oh my God, that was so good. But anyway, she had to take care of hers, so I had to take care of my, my place.

DC: OK. So your grandmother was busy taking care of . . .

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: Wow. So you really had a lot to do.

DS: Yeah. Right. Going to, rushing to work and coming home and, yeah, yeah. It's still going to be bothering me, if I worked midnights, where did—where were the kids sleeping?

DC: Well, did they sleep in your grandmother's portion of the house?

DS: No. No. Because I had . . .

DC: They didn't do that, OK. Was your husband around at all in the early part of the war?

DS: [Pause.] Hmm.

DC: Maybe he worked days.

DS: When I go to bed today, instead of sleeping I'll think about it, and then I'll be able to call you and tell you.

DC: I don't know if your husband ever interacted with the kids.

DS: And then when I moved to Herman Gardens, then I had to have—my cousin stayed with me. Her name was Mary Ann. And she was about—she must've been about eighteen or something. So that was the same time that my kids went to St. Christopher when the pastor told me I didn't make any donations.

DC: What denomination was St. Christopher?

DS: Catholic.

DC: It was Catholic, OK. Yeah.

DS: And then after awhile, I guess they didn't have enough kids going to school so then they said OK, you can send your kids here. [Laughs.]

DC: Did you attend the church?

DS: Pardon?

DC: Did you attend that church?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Had you gone to church as a child, as well?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah. I—in fact, they have a thing going for the seniors, that they're going to go back to the same church that we used to—oh, my Mother and the kids used to go to church but my Father didn't.

DC: Oh, he didn't?

DS: Yeah, yeah. So . . .

DC: Do you know why?

DS: I don't know. You know, he was good to us. He never beat us or anything, you know—I mean, he wasn't, he wasn't affectionate. Because I remember when he died, somebody said, you know, that's when they used to have people in the house. They didn't take them to the funeral parlor. And somebody said to me, "Well kiss your Father goodbye." And I said, "I didn't kiss him when he was living. I'm not going to kiss him now!" [Laughs]

DC: When did he die?

DS: Heart.

DC: Oh, he died of a heart problem. Do you remember when that was?

DS: Oh God, if I could run upstairs I'll tell you.

DC: Well that's OK. We can figure it out. Were you an adult or were you a kid?

DS: That was after I got married, so that must—yeah. Yeah, because after—wait just a minute!

DC: OK, I'll do that. [Tape turned off for a bit]

DS: . . .have you got it working?

DC: Yep, it's working—it's going.

DS: All right. That's where I—that's where I got my . . .

DC: Oh, Detroit Business Institute.

DS: And look, that's the year.

DC: Yep, 1967. We had it figured out!

DS: Yeah. And there's where I took the shorthand. For a whole year I went, went back to school, on the bus, going and coming! And we were there from about 8:00 to 3:00. Yeah.

DC: It looks to me like you probably went back to school when Linda—just after she was eighteen.

DS: Yeah.

DC: That sound about right?

DS: Yeah. Right, right.

DC: OK. So she was off on her own, and then—doing whatever she was doing, and then . . .

DS: Yeah.

DC: All right. Well that helped us pinpoint the time. [Pause, while DS looks through some papers] Oh, those are the memorials. Yeah.

DS: Oh, this is when my husband died.

DC: OK, all right.

DS: When he was born, I guess.

DC: Oh, he just passed away very recently.

DS: Yeah. That's my husband. Hmm, I wonder if Kim has those? Oh no, here they are. Do you care about my brother? The youngest brother died?

DC: OK, yeah. Right, OK. Look, this is in Polish, right? Let's see, I want to write this down. I can't read it, but it's interesting! OK, 1935.

DS: He was only, what, thirteen years old. He died of heart.

DC: Oh, so heart problems are in your family it seems like.

DS: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

DC: This is your brother. So what was your given name? Is your given name Polish? I mean, this looks like . . .

DS: Kudrycki?

DC: This is Kudrycki, OK. But it's, what, Kudrycki, but I guess I meant his first name.

DS: Richard.

DC: Richard, OK. But it's spelled in Polish here. [spelled Ryszard]

DS: Yeah. Right.

DC: Do they spell your name in Polish, too?

DS: My name?

DC: Dorothy? Did they spell your name in Polish?

DS: No, I don't think so.

DC: No, OK. All right.

DS: And this is my Father.

DC: OK, that's your Father.

DS: Look how old that is. [Juljan Kudrycki, 1888-1938]

DC: OK, he died in 1938. Yeah. You would've been married for about a year.

DS: Yeah. Yeah, because I remember having pictures taken on my wedding.

DC: OK. And he died of a heart problem?

DS: Oh yeah. After my Mother died, then he decided to get married, and that's what did him in. [laughs]

DC: Oh my, my. So when did your Mother die?

DS: Here.

DC: This is your Mother, OK. Boy, look at this.

DS: And her name was Francis. [on the certificate, Franciszka]

DC: OK. So she died, you're right, just a year before your Father.

DS: Yeah, she wasn't there for my wedding.

DC: Oh, OK. She died before your wedding.

DS: In '37, see, and that's when I got married. But she died, I think, in January, and I got married in August.

DC: Do you know how, or what happened to her? She was only 41 years old. How did she die?

DS: Pneumonia. Before they had penicillin. Because they were treating her with sulphur. Sulfa? Yeah.

DC: So both of your parents died within a year.

DS: Yeah.

DC: How did you deal with that?

DS: And my brother, too.

DC: And your brother, *too,* that's right.

DS: Three years.

DC: Would've been three years.

DS: So then when I was supposed to have my daughter, because I weighed like two hundred, you know, because I was filled with water. I thought it was my turn to die. Yeah.

DC: Oh wow, OK. So you had some complications.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. What did they say when you have water? Toxic? Something toxis?

DC: Toxemia?

DS: And this is my grandmother. Look at how old—she wasn't that old, either. [Josephine Ciszewski, 1873-1948] I was trying to find that letter that—no, that's the school. Well, it doesn't matter.

DC: Well you would've had an awful lot of big changes in your life, with three family members dying, getting married, having a baby, all within about four years.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Wow. Did you stay close with your sister when you moved out to Dodge Main and all that?

DS: Yeah, we always got together, you know—like for Easter and Christmas and things like that, you know.

DC: It sounds like you didn't see her as often as you did before.

DS: No, because I lived here and she lived there.

DC: West Side, right.

DS: But we got together pretty good, you know. We were pretty close. Of course, she had a good husband and I didn't [laughs] so, you know, sometimes you don't like to—this is the year that, when was he born? 1917, same as mine, my husband.

DC: OK. Same as you.

DS: My first husband. I didn't tell you I got married when I was fifty! [laughs]

DC: No, you didn't tell me. [laughs] Oh, you did, OK! All right, you got married again, 1967. All right.

DS: All right, let's see, when was Anthony . . .

DC: So you started taking courses and got married.

DS: Yeah. Right. And this is my husband's year.

DC: Oh, OK. He was about the same age as you, as well. Yeah.

DS: And he was in England for four years.

DC: Was that during the war?

DS: In the Army, yeah.

DC: OK. Did you know him at that point?

DS: No. Let's see, where did I work? Oh, my God, I worked—where did I work? I worked at a winery, in the office—what the hell time was that? It was before I got married, what year did—oh, I was fifty so that must've been . . .

DC: '67. Yeah.

DS: [pause] Hmm. So I met him in the winery and I got married after my kids—after Linda got married at eighteen—no, she got married at twenty. I figured, I got rid of my kids and now I can get married. He was such a good man compared to the first one. And—and he

died at 62. Fibrillation of the heart, because he had high blood pressure. But you know how men are. They don't want to go to the doctor. He said he's healthy, he's healthy. Well I didn't realize that high blood pressure ran in their family, you know, history. So that's what, that's what did him in. He just went downstairs one day and—and he died. With no, you know . . .

DC: Died with no warning.

DS: Yeah. Oh my God. And he was 62. Well, I was 62 also, now. How did I ever survive all this? So here I am, 85.

DC: Yeah, you're plugging right along.

DS: You can put me down for . . .

DC: What's that?

DS: What was this? Oh this was—so I keep—keep this together.

DC: Yeah, keep it together—don't lose track of it.

DS: Tell me what else you want to know.

DC: Well, I'm still wondering if you can remember anything more about the Dodge Main plant. It seems like that period of your life was pretty busy with young kids and moving and . . .

DS: Yeah. I bought an old clunker of a car and I used to pick up two other women, and sometimes the car broke down halfway. That was from Herman Gardens, wasn't it? Yeah. So this gal would get out, and she'd take a bobby pin, or a hairpin out of her hair and she did something and it got the car started. [laughs]

DC: Really? Wow. So you would carpool over to Herman Gardens—or from Herman Gardens to Dodge Main.

DS: Yeah.

DC: Can you remember anything more about what you did in the Dodge Main plant now?

DS: Isn't that funny?

DC: Is it coming to you or not coming to you?

DS: Hmm.

DC: Not coming to you. Do you remember how long you worked there?

DS: [pause] Again, I must've got laid off. Because why would I go—to work at the winery? No. Yeah. I must've gotten laid off again. Because I didn't have much seniority. Yeah. God knows, what did I do at the—I mean, at the winery, I just—oh, they had all kinds of bird seed and cat food and dog food and all that.

DC: Do you remember when you worked at the winery?

DS: Yeah, and what the—I used to do the checks. Checks? Oh, God. Where was I living at that time? Hmm. [pause] I lived on Renville [just west of Lonyo St., just east of Dearborn], but why would I live on Renville? And that's where—that's where Tony used to come over on Renville. Why did I live there? And Linda was married already.

DC: OK. So you worked at the winery after Linda was married?

DS: Yeah.

DC: All right.

DS: Yeah, probably because I needed the job. Yeah, and that's where I lived, too, when I used to go to the school. So what year was that?

DC: That would be in the '60s. 1966? . . .

DS: Seven.

DC: '67, yeah. OK.

DS: Yeah, that's right.

DC: OK, so that would explain if you got laid off in the '60s, but it doesn't tell us much about what you did in the '50s. That seems to be a hard time to remember. How about this—did your kids go to St. Christopher school all the way through while you lived at Herman Gardens?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: All right. And then who looked after them while you went to work?

DS: The woman next door. Her name was Vi. And I—yeah, I was paying her fifteen dollars a week for watching the kids.

DC: And what shift did you work at Dodge Main?

DS: [pause] Must've been the afternoon shift. Yeah. From 4:00 to 12:00. Yeah. And—and this woman got a television set—because I was paying her fifteen dollars a week—before we did! [laughs] Whatever. Oh my God, what year was that then?

DC: So she got a television set, and it sounds—were you a bit envious of that?

DS: Yeah! Yeah! And another thing I remember, when things were really rough, I was still working—I was working, and my boy said to me, "How come these people have oranges"—and they were on welfare—"and we don't?" You know, because maybe an orange was a—like a luxury or something, you know, I mean. I had to pay rent and pay this and pay telephone and pay everything else, you know. So I don't know if I bought him some oranges or not. Whatever, but I remember that. Just little things you—you, you know, you remember.

DC: Sure. Well how did you pay all the bills?

DS: It was rough, rough. Especially when—oh, then, after I got divorced, then my husband married and at least then I was getting my twenty-one dollars a month, you know, so. Yeah.

DC: OK. So did you—did you start getting that twenty-one dollars after your husband, your ex-husband, remarried?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DC: OK. All right. But not before.

DS: No, no. Yeah. So that's when my—was the rough part, you know. Isn't that funny I can't remember what I did at Dodge's? I should remember.

DC: I can understand why it might be hard to remember . . .

DS: [Loud laughter.]

DC: . . . with all you had to do. Yeah, right. But I'm still—I mean, I don't mean to press if the answers aren't coming to you. But let's see—were you still working at the Dodge Main when you had to leave Herman Gardens?

DS: [pause] Yeah, because that's when I had moved on Renville, and that was near McGraw and—McGraw and Michigan. Yeah. [She's right about location.]

DC: All right. So you were still working at Dodge Main. So you were there, really, through most of the 1950s.

DS: Yeah. Right, right. Yeah. Yeah, because that's when I lived . . .

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

DS: . . .and where do you live?

DC: I live in Ann Arbor.

DS: Oh, do you? Yeah. Oh.

DC: Yeah, so I came over here from Ann Arbor.

DS: You make pretty good wages as a . . .

DC: Not compared to an auto worker.

DS: [laughs] I guess teachers don't get paid too much. But you're a professor, you should . . .

DC: I make less than public school teachers, but . . .

DS: You do?

DC: Yeah, but I like what I do, so that's the tradeoff.

DS: Oh my.

DC: If you like what you do then, you know, that's worth something.

DS: Yeah. What nationality are you?

DC: I'm a lot of different things.

DS: It's different—because you're so much . . .

DC: Oh, I get tan when I'm out in the sun.

DS: Oh, do you?

DC: Dutch, French, hard to know—some of my grandparents . . .

DS: I'm reading a book that has a lot of French in it, and I wish I knew what they were saying!

DC: Well, I never learned the language, so I'm no use to you there at all. Anyways, let's see . . .

DS: I'm trying to think, we're trying to think what I did at Dodge Main.

DC: Well how about this—you mentioned that at the Plymouth Road plant, there weren't any

blacks working there. Were there—were any blacks working at Dodge Main?

DS: No, not that I recall. Unless maybe—I don't think so. Not, you know . . .

DC: Not that you recall, OK. This is in Hamtramck, right?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Boy, now they're in bad shape. I saw on the—on TV.

DC: Oh yeah?

DS: Yeah.

DC: Well let's see. Well, were you—so it sounds like your income was tight as well. Do you remember any of your supervisors at Dodge Main?

DS: [pause] No.

DC: No, OK. That's a blur. You know, I stayed home to raise kids for six years, and I know that life is—is a bit of a blur in those circumstances.

DS: Yeah, right. When I won't think of it, maybe it will come to me, what I did at Dodge's. Oh I know, wait a minute—what was the last name? I know he was a super—he was a foreman or a supervisor. What the hell is that name? Helen—Helen, Helen what? Helen—come on Dorothy! [Frieda?]!

DC: OK, all right.

DS: Frieda, yeah that was his name. And he was a supervisor there.

DC: At Dodge Main, OK. And what was he like?

DS: Very nice, because I liked his wife, you know.

DC: OK, all right.

DS: Yeah, yeah. So—yeah.

DC: And who was his wife again?

DS: Helen.

DC: Helen, OK. All right.

DS: Frieda.

DC: OK, I got that. Let's see, so—we're having a hard time figuring that out. Well, how did

you like St. Christopher school, once you got your kids in there?

DS: Well another thing happened. The pastor died.

DC: Oh, OK. This is the one who wondered why you hadn't given money?

DS: OK, the pastor died. And my son, he must've been ten or twelve or something—he didn't direct the traffic of the people that came to the funeral of this pastor. Maybe he—oh, OK, all right. So he was suspended from school for three days. So then I hated them all. Then his poor dog died, you know, the pastor's dog. So maybe they were into all this abuse then. Oh, I know, where was this? Where was I living at the time? My [ex-] husband used to come over and—where was I living at the time? This priest wanted to take my son to a cottage for a week, you know, and I thought, oh that would be good for him to get with men in the cottage, have a nice time. So then when my [ex-]husband used to come over to visit the kids, he says, "No way, he's not going with no priest." And just the other day, I thought, maybe being a man, he would realize why this priest would want these young boys to go to this cottage, you know, with all that's been going on now—so many years ago. They didn't get it from a woman—they'd get it from little boys, you know. So I didn't send him, because my [ex-]husband said no, you know. Ex-husband.

DC: How often did your ex-husband come to visit the kids?

DS: Um—maybe like once or twice a month. But then he used to drink beer and he'd get violent, you know. Yeah.

DC: With you or with the kids?

DS: Yeah, with me. Yeah.

DC: Was that true when you were married as well?

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah, because I know when I was carrying David—I was pregnant—we went to a dance—no, to something, maybe a wedding or something, maybe a dance. My sister and her husband was there, so my sister was there. And I told—oh, he thought he was a ladies man, you know, so he—who's going to see this besides you and I? [laughs] Anyway, I said, "I don't want you dancing with any gal that you see," you know, so then anyway we went outside to argue or something. And he grabbed me by the throat, you know, and then—then he let go and I couldn't breathe anymore, you know. And then my sister said, "You're doing this to your wife, you know, and my sister? How dare you! And especially, she's pregnant!" And he says, "How do I know that's mine?"

DC: Did your sister tell you that at the time, did she tell you he had said that?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So, I didn't have a normal life. [Edgy laughter]

DC: Yeah, well it might be all too normal.

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, thank God. It's a wonder I'm living today! But anyway.

DC: Well did—I mean, how did you feel about the marriage at that point?

DS: About the what?

DC: About your marriage at that point.

DS: It was pretty rough, you know. That was—yeah, so like I say, then—'45, and then when he came back I thought we could still, you know, since he was gone, everything would be all right, you know, and then that's when I had Linda. But it didn't turn out. I figured, I'm not living like this, you know. Especially after my Grandma, you know, I'd—I was washing clothes in those hard times, you know, putting this in this—and somebody called me, and they said, "If you want to see your husband come down to" such-and-such a bar. This is more of a love story than what you could use! Anyway, I turned the gas burners off, you know, and I—I don't know if I took the kids downstairs and naturally, I didn't have a car, so I took a streetcar to this bar. And sure enough, he was there with a woman, you know. That's another time I got—and I said, no—how did I say that? "I want to know what kind of whore you hang around with," you know. And I took the beer bottle and I threw the beer at him, you know—not the bottle, just the beer. So then the bartender said, "Oh, we can't have that." He said, "You got to leave. We can't have that." I said, "I'm going." But I said, "You're not coming back to my house." That's—and he didn't. And then I threw his clothes out and God knows where he went. But he never did come back. So he probably went to her, because she is the one he married anyway. And then isn't it funny? My daughter used to have him for Father's Day, because it was still her Father, you know. And what he did to me, that was different. But he'd bring his wife with him, you know, and she was a nice woman. I mean, you know, if it wasn't her, it would've been somebody else, you know. And I said, you know, I said—I was friendly with her. And then we'd say something, and I says, "Better you have him than me!" I said, "I don't feel bad about you having him at all!" But anyway, they're both dead now so I shouldn't be speaking of the dead. [Laughs.]

DC: Well, OK. But it certainly had a big impact on your life.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So then, did you decide to get the divorce at that point?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And of course, he didn't—but like I say, they—what did I have? I didn't have too much, you know, maybe just furniture and stuff, you know. But as far as—I didn't even have a car, did I? No. So . . .

DC: And then did you decide to move?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Was that to get away from him?

DS: Right, right. Yeah. Well I didn't let him come back, so.

DC: Did he try, ever, to come back?

DS: No, he didn't. I'm surprised. I don't know where he went or what he did. Funny I wouldn't ask him what happened to him, but whatever. Yeah. It was no concern of mine, I mean . . .

DC: Now you'd been raised in the Catholic Church. Did you have misgivings about a divorce?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. But then—it was my youngest daughter that drove me someplace, I don't know where, but she drove me and I talked to a real nice priest. And he said that I could go back to receiving Holy Communion, you know, so. That was good. So, I believe in God and I think I lived a pretty good life.

DC: It was many years later, it sounds like, if it was your younger daughter driving you.

DS: Right, right. Yeah. But I just, you know, since it was bad to get a divorce—in fact, I had one girlfriend—well we went to—well I did take some trips—I have to tell you that. I went to Las Vegas with her and her husband and—what year could that? And I went to Poland, too, so I must've had some money somewhere along the way. My life wasn't that bad, you know. So anyway, she said, "Don't tell my husband that you're divorced, because he wouldn't want me hanging around you." I said "OK, whatever."

DC: Wow. Let's see . . .

DS: You know, when I went to Poland, God knows what time—see, I wonder where that letter is? Maybe Kim has got it. Anyway, I went to Poland, but that was when they were still with the guards standing, you know, and this one woman, her husband was a—what was he? A poet or a painter? Must've been a painter. So for the people with a—not, I couldn't say better education, but people with a—[pause] that are, like painters and artists and whatever, they're buried in a special cemetery there in Poland, you know. So anyway, her daughter spoke up against the communists, so she was—she had to move out. She couldn't live there in whatever—in Warsaw, you know. So, they were still in control, and she was real sad because it was her daughter and her husband was an artist. Artist—that's what I was saying, all the artists, you know, because we went to the cemetery with her, you know, to water the grave. Once I buried my husband, I figured he's dead, he's dead. I don't want to go back in the cemetery. But anyway, there was—that was nice. And I got pictures of being in Poland, you know. And I went to—oh, I went to visit—this friend I went with, she had a cousin living there, and when Jessie went there, you know, they think the streets are paved with gold here, you know. So anyway she gave him money for a bathtub, you know. And it was a farm, so I went to the barn with this cousin of hers, and the cousin was milking the cow, and you know, I haven't spoken Polish for so long, you

know, that I had to kind of, pull those words out, and whatever I couldn't say, she would help me a little bit, you know. But that was fun. I enjoyed that. And that trip back then was about only three hundred dollars, you know, round-trip. And I thought now, oh my God, you know . . .

DC: Did you speak Polish as a child?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah. Not too much, you know, but—because I remember my Mother and my aunt would speak Polish when they didn't want us to know what they were talking about, you know, so. But I went back to—where was I living? Oh, I was living on Pierson here after I got married, my husband and I, we bought a house here on Pierson. [far west side of Detroit] Cute little house.

DC: This is your second husband?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Then I went back to school, not St. Christopher, but the other school: St. Peter and Paul. And I took Polish up. In fact, my granddaughter just called because they—when they—oh, somebody that is going to school, she wanted to know—well, anyway, in Polish the song is—"Stella, Stella [sp?], hundred years, hundred years, hundred years," and her sister-in-law's going to school, and they used—whenever there was a birthday party, they'd always sing this song in Polish, you know. So my granddaughter was saying now her sister-in-law's going to school and she wants to know how to write this in her report, or whatever she's doing. And by God, I found the Polish book, and there it was. [Laughs] So at least it's authentic, you know.

DC: Can you remember at all when you *stopped* working at Dodge Main?

DS: All right, let me see, let me see. Because at fifty I was working for the State, right?

DC: I'm not sure. I'm not sure if you told me much about working for the state. The best I can tell right now . . .

DS: I went to school when I was fifty, so I got the job, OK.

DC: Did you work with the state after you went to school?

DS: Yeah. That's . . .

DC: OK, so that would've been in the '60s.

DS: Well they would come to the school and pick up the . . .

DC: Right. What were you doing when you decided to go to school? Well, maybe I can ask it a different way. Were you still at Dodge Main when Linda graduated from high school?

DS: God, could I call her and find out?

DC: Yeah, sure!

DS: No, I was working at the feed store.

DC: Feed store! We haven't talked about that yet.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK, so when Linda graduated, you were at the feed store. That would've been in the middle-1960s.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: How long did you work at the feed store?

DS: [pause] I must have worked there till—what was I doing? They had, they had the wine—they were making the wine in the factory or whatever, and I worked in the office. That's right. So that's where I met Tony. So what was the question you asked? [Loud laughs.]

DC: Yeah, we're getting sidetracked.

DS: The feed store, yeah.

DC: Well I'm just trying to work out a basic chronology to figure out how long you were at the Dodge Main plant, so I was asking a number of questions to try to figure out the pieces of the puzzle. And you mentioned working for the State, you mentioned the feed store, and the winery is in there somewhere, but I think that's after you went to school, as well.

DS: Yeah, yeah. I was still working at the winery when I went to school when I was fifty. So that must have been between—when did I work at Dodge Main?

DC: Yeah. I can tell you, in talking to some other people, I know that there were a lot of layoffs both in 1954 and in 1958, and 1959. I'm not sure if, you know, if that would've affected you at all. I guess Pat would've graduated in '57, and then she went to work and you had to move from Herman Gardens. Were you still working at Dodge Main at that point in time?

DS: [pause] Yeah, I probably was. Yeah. And if I moved from Herman Gardens, then I moved—moved, moved, moved—wait, where did I move? Oh! I forgot to tell you! With my husband's GI, he bought me a house in Dearborn Heights—no . . .

DC: This is your ex-husband?

DS: Yeah. Yeah. Oh my God. Hmm. [pause and laughs] I'm trying to think. Where was I working? Oh, I was working at the winery because I had to take the freeway. Oh, my God. Hmm. From Hipp [Street, runs through both Dearborn and Dearborn Heights]. I lived on Hipp, in Dearborn—what church did we go to? And where was it? Hmm.

DC: It sounds like this was *before* your second marriage.

DS: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. [pause]

DC: Had you moved out to Dearborn or Dearborn Heights?

DS: I think it was Dearborn Heights.

DC: Why did you move out there?

DS: Because he bought the house for me with the GI thing.

DC: And why did he choose Dearborn Heights?

DS: Oh, because it was a HUD house.

DC: Oh, OK. All right. It was one he was eligible to purchase with the GI benefits?

DS: Yeah. Yeah. It was very nice, and I lived there many years.

DC: Now was that where you went *after* you left Herman Gardens, or did you go someplace in between?

DS: Herman Gardens—no, that's when I went to Lark[ins]—no, that's when I went to, where did I say I lived there for six months? From Herman Gardens I went there.

DC: Oh, that's right. You mentioned that.

DS: Yeah.

DC: It's on the tape. I don't have it written down.

DS: It's on the tape.

DC: On the tape, yeah.

DS: All right. Yeah. So I lived there and then I went to Herman Gardens. Yeah, and then from Herman Gardens, it's where my husband bought this house on Hipp in Dearborn Heights. And I still worked at the winery at that time.

DC: Oh, you're at the winery. So you had moved to the winery by then.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: All right. Well, we're zeroing in on it a bit here. I would imagine some of your children might remember this part.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: They'd probably be able to piece it together a bit.

DS: Well, you know, when I talk to her I could ask her and I could call you.

DC: That would be fine. That would be great. Yeah. It would just help me pin down when some of these things happened, you know. Dates aren't always the most important thing, but sometimes if I can figure out where you were at a particular point in time, it makes more sense.

DS: Yeah, because I seem to be jumping.

DC: Oh, that's the way these things go. That's how conversations go. That's not a problem. Let's see—it's a little hard to ask questions about that period when I don't quite know exactly what was going on, but that happens. That's OK. It was a really busy time in your life.

DS: Now you want to think about—I'll have to write down—what I did in Dodge Main.

DC: Yeah, that's one that would be interesting to know more about.

DS: The kind of work.

DC: And then how long you worked there.

DS: And how long.

DC: Mm hmm.

DS: OK.

DC: Do you ever remember being involved with the union at all at Dodge Main?

DS: [pause] No, because—because then I would go to my friend's, since he was the union member, and he was a union member for a long time. God, I wonder if she's living. Hmm. I could put a—my daughter-in-law could put it on the computer, see if she's still living.

DC: Yeah, if you could ask and find out that would be helpful.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. Johnston! That's right. All right, I got to see if she—Lila Johnston. Either Johnston or Johnson. That's a good idea. Then she'd be able to tell me. Yeah.

DC: It's worth a try. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

DS: Right, right.

DC: Do you ever remember being on strike at all, any time?

DS: Yeah, now that you mention it. But what year would that be?

DC: I don't know. Do you know where you were working when you were on strike?

DS: [pause] Would that be before the union? Before the—that's what they called the strike, when the—yeah, when the people were in the factory.

DC: The sit down?

DS: Yeah.

DC: You talked a bit about that, how you helped feed them and bring them food.

DS: Yeah. Right.

DC: Is that the one you were thinking of?

DS: Yeah. That was the strike, yeah. Because, I think maybe some people wanted the union and some didn't, or whatever, and the people that wanted it struck. Yeah.

DC: OK. All right. But you don't remember any strikes after that point in time?

DS: No, no.

DC: Can you think of any other questions I should be asking you that I haven't?

DS: About the factories?

DC: About any of these things.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. [pause] And when I went to school, it was another—my friend told me, it was another—not like HUD, but something else. But this place that I lived, I paid cheap rent because of the HUD. Yeah, yeah. So, seems I'm always looking for something.

DC: Sure. Well, how did you like the business courses that you took?

DS: I liked them very much, yeah. Yeah. I had to go—probably, I don't know if I had a car—couldn't have. Why would I take a streetcar back and forth, you know?

DC: I think you told me once before where the courses were taught, but I don't remember. Where did you go to take the courses? OK, there's the envelope, that's right. Oh, OK, right downtown. OK. So you were fifty years old. How about your classmates, how old were they?

DS: In school?

DC: Yeah, when you went to school.

DS: There I had a lot of black people.

DC: Oh did you, OK.

DS: Yeah, yeah. The friend I went with, well she was younger. No, and the friend that—where did I—oh, we went to, my friend and I went to—oh God, where they have the parades. Not Las Vegas—where do they have the parades and they throw things from a—come on . . .

DC: New Orleans?

DS: Huh?

DC: New Orleans?

DS: New Orleans, yeah! I went with her—yeah they were about my age. Yeah. And Alice and—yeah, there was about four of them that I hung around with, you know.

DC: How about your classmates, were they all, you know, around your same age at this business school?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: OK, so it was mostly middle-aged women then.

DS: There was a few blacks, because I used to sit in back of one and I don't think they ever washed their hair yet.

DC: Oh really, oh.

DS: You know, they put them in braids and then I guess they don't wash their hair, or whatever, you know. But that I remember. But I enjoyed that, you know, I enjoyed going to school.

You know, I wasn't too old. I was only fifty.

DC: And then what job did you get when you got out of school?

DS: That's when I went for the State. I was the secretary to the Highway Department.

DC: OK. Tell me about that a little bit, if you have . . .

DS: Yeah, that was fun.

DC: What was fun about it?

DS: Because I worked with engineers and I took shorthand and typing. And . . .

DC: Where was the job? Where did you have to go to work?

DS: Southfield and Nine Mile Road. Yeah. They're still there, yeah. Yeah. And there was one black man. He was an engineer. And he said he sent his kids to a Catholic school, you know. So I said, OK. And they were doing real good, but then I don't know what—so then they came home one day, not because of the school, but maybe for the kids that they played with, and they started talking like the coloreds talk. And he said, "Boy did I put my foot down." He said, "I am not sending you to school to learn how to speak properly." He says, "If you use that language again, you're going to see their belts," or whatever, you know. So he was—they were all very nice. You know, when you're an engineer, you're not no—somebody off the street or something, you know, so. Yeah, so. I enjoyed working there.

DC: How long did you work there?

DS: Twelve years.

DC: OK.

DS: Yeah. Yeah. So then I retired at sixty-two and they threw me a big party, you know, in the hall. So that was nice. I got the whole album of all the engineers, you know—somebody took pictures. So, whenever we go traveling—my daughter lives up north, Linda, in Oscoda, and Pat lives in Wixom—and what was I going to say? [Laughs.]

DC: Well I think you were talking about working at the State and you took some sort of—they threw you a party, maybe they [phone rings, loudly!]

DS: Yeah, you know, when I'm in the basement, well I usually don't take my phone down there . . .

DC: Well, I think you were talking about how they threw you a big party when you retired and then maybe they gave you something? I don't know if they did.

DS: Oh, I got a lot of gifts, you know, too. And a few of the men died already, I mean, well I guess twenty years ago, you're liable to—yeah. One engineer was working on his car and he had the door open—Sinthe—what was his name? Sinthenelli [sp?] or something, and anyway you see trucks with that name, you know. And the car backed over him and killed him. Yeah. Whatever. So anyway. But, you know, we had to fill out a form that told you, you know, what your job consisted of. So I had another—she worked in my department, too. So she made her job sound so wonderful that left me with nothing to do. But anyway, and nobody liked her. Her name was Vera. I forget what they call them, like a—it'll come to me later, so. So I think that's about all.

DC: Well I know we probably have to wrap up soon, but I just wondered if you could compare working as a secretary for the State with your work in the auto factories. Can you make any comparisons at all between the two jobs?

DS: Well that's—I was thinking, that's what I went to school in high school for, you know. And the other one was—I had to work because there was no choice, you know. And then I got back to what I went to school for, and I really enjoyed that, you know. That's right, because I had the heart attack when I was fifty-nine and I still worked two more, three more years, you know. Then I thought, that's it, you know, at sixty-two. And that was when, then I could get my pension and Social Security, so that was all right. I figured that's enough fun, I'm tired.

DC: Yeah, well you've managed to hang in there really well. You're doing great.

DS: Yeah, so. And when did I move here? Oh! That's—and then after I moved, where did I live? Oh, I lived on Pierson, yeah. And then my husband died, and I sold the house. Oh, because I was waiting for this place. You know, I only paid two—two fifty for this place, you know, because of it being HUD. So anyway, this was really good, so it wasn't—I waited five years to move in here, you know. And so then I moved up north in Oscoda, and I lived there, too, till they called me here.

DC: Oh, OK, so you were waiting until this opened up. So did you live with your daughter up there?

DS: No, I lived by myself. The three of us pitched in and bought a small cottage up there, you know. So we had a lot of fun up there. My sister used to come up there, and, well Linda, she was practically raised there, you know. And she came up with her kids and we really had a ball there. And then, then again, it never—oh, I know why I had to move from that house on Hipp. I was going to tell you. They paved the streets, so they raised the—not the rent, but when you own the house, what do you pay?

DC: Taxes? The property taxes?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Did they make you pay for the paving?

DS: Yeah, so I had to move again.

DC: Oh gee. So you . . .

DS: But I was able to live there a year, because the equity or something, you know.

DC: So you got moved by the expressway and you got moved by the paving.

DS: Yeah, yeah. So where did I move from here? Where did I move from here?

DC: You could put it down on the list there. Maybe you could get some help from your kids with that question, too.

DS: Yeah, yeah. When did I move from here? How old were the kids? Oh, my daughter Linda was, I mean Pat, was in New York studying to be an actress. Yeah, at eighteen. Yeah.

DC: So this would've been at the end of the '50's, '57?

DS: And my son was going to Cody [High School], and that was on Southfield [Road] here. And Linda was having a ball, she was going to school there and we had a—she bought all these 45 [rpm] records. That's when I worked at the winery. Then where did I move from here? [pause] Where did I move from here? [pause] Did I get married at fifty?

DC: Yeah, about. Fifty-one.

DS: Yeah, I must've got married.

DC: So, you moved because you were married.

DS: Yes, I got married, and that's when Tony bought the house. Hmm. It's funny, but you move so many times that you don't—you think well that's junk—that's junk, you know.

DC: Right, right, right. Well I don't mean to get bogged down on those details, but I'm just curious to know how long you worked at Dodge Main and then where these other jobs fit in. But the State job was certainly after you finished the business course.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: So somewhere in between there's the feed store, the winery, and all that stuff. Yeah, you did a lot!

DS: Yeah. [laughs] Too many, too many jobs and too many places!

DC: Yeah, yeah. Well you're like a traveling road map here for the metro area.

DS: Yeah. Right. OK. When I find out, I got your number.

DC: OK, that's great. Yeah.

DS: And when I find out all these things—I'll talk to my daughter and my son, and maybe they can recollect more than I can.

DC: They might, yeah. And if not, so be it. But it's been wonderful talking to you. Yeah, I really enjoyed it.

DS: Like I say, I forgot what I did at Dodge's, but whatever!

DC: Yeah. Now, you know, again, this form here, I don't know how you feel about it, but if I'm ever to be able to—if I'm ever to be able to use any of the information, I'd need you to sign that. Yeah. If that's OK, then . . .

DS: Print?

DC: Yeah, I guess print and then a signature down here. And, you know, again the legalese just basically means that your—you know, when I give you a copy of the tape—because you made it very clear you want one. I'll make you a copy and get it to you—you can do anything you want with it and you'd be giving me permission to use the material as well if I, you know, were to write something.

DS: Very good. Will you be able to use any of that?

DC: Oh yeah. That's very interesting stuff.

DS: Yeah?

DC: Absolutely. Yeah.

DS: Because I didn't give you too much about the factory.

DC: Well, you did fine. Even just the story about the acid pot, the solder pot—that stuff I've never heard of before. But the thing is that, you know, not many people think that their own lives are all that spectacular. But they are to other people, you know? And you're so used to your life that—but even today, you could see that you were thinking, wow, you know, I went through a lot. But when you piece together a number of stories like that, then all of a sudden you have a whole lot more information about the past than you ever had before. And that's really important.

DS: Honest to God. Today's the 14th?

DC: The 14th, it's my son's birthday. So it's the 14th. I guess I can stop this.

[Postscript after the tape was shut off for awhile.]

DS: . . . after the school I went there, and I was a . . .

DC: To Ford Hospital.

DS: Ford Hospital on the [West Grand] Boulevard there. I was a, what kind of sec—medical secretary. So I got all these books, you know. And the doctor—oh that's right, another funny thing. The doctors used to give me the—what you're doing, and then I'd have to put them on a machine and type them. So there was one, the foreign-speaking one. What did he say? My God. Oh, yeah. He said something "market." You know, and I thought, what is he talking about, a food market or whatever? But that wasn't, that wasn't—it was *marked*, M-A-R-K-E-D, and not market. No wonder I couldn't do these!

DC: Oh, I know. It's not easy.

DS: Hey, that's another person I'm going to call, is Alice and see—see if—yeah, and I didn't work there too long. She worked there till she retired, you know. My friend. But as soon as the State called me, I figured that was, you know, that was better than—oh, that's right, that's when they had that riot there. And I figured, I'm not going back there. I'll get killed, you know. You know. So what year was that, that riot?

DC: 1967. That's right in that time frame. OK, so you were working down at Ford then, at Ford Hospital at the time of the riot. Did you go down there to work during the riot?

DS: Oh no. That's when I didn't go. That was it. I don't know what I did in between time, but I figured—they said it was too dangerous, you know, they would have the guard take you, you know, and I thought, no I got to do something else, you know. I got three kids to take care of, you know. Yeah—no they were already pretty old. Yeah.

DC: Yeah, I guess they would've been out of school by that point.

DS: Yeah. Oh and my son, after he graduated from Cody, then he became an engineer. But he had to take the test twice, you know, so—once he didn't pass it, but he passed it the second time. So I got pretty smart kids.

DC: Yeah, I guess so! They've done well.

DS: Maybe they take after the Mother a little bit.

DC: Oh I'm sure that they benefited from your pluck and perseverance. They definitely saw someone who battles.

DS: Yeah. OK. If I find out something, I will call you. And if you want to know something else, then you call me.

End of Interview