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THE 20th CENTURY TRADE UNION WOMAN: VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

DOROTHY and HENRY KRAUS

United Auto Workers

by

Patricia Yeghissian

Program on Women and Work

Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations

University of Michigan - Wayne State University

Ann Arbor, Michigan

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VITAE

DORTHY AND HENRY KRAUS

Dorothy Kraus and her husband Henry participated in a combined interview. This vita contains biographical information about both of them.

Dorothy Rogin was born in Poland about 1908 and was raised in Cleveland, Ohio. Her father, a house painter, immigrated before WWI, followed by her mother and sisters in 1920. She was in high school when she met Henry Kraus, a student at Western Reserve College. Henry was born in 1905 and grew up in New York. His father was active in a barber's union, which was affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World. His father had difficulty finding a job because of his union activities so the family moved to Cleveland.

Dorothy's interest in unions grew out of her work with a YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) theater group of young working class women. The skits they performed dealt with their experiences and problems as working class women. In 1935, she started the People's Theater and in January, 1936, they performed before a Cleveland Federation of Labor meeting. Later the theater was discontinued when leading actors were hired by the Federal Theater Project, a New Deal program for unemployed actors.

While Dorothy was active in labor theater, Henry helped establish and edited the United Auto Worker, an American Federation of Labor (AF of L) newspaper (1934). By the end of the next year, the auto workers had broken from the AF of L and started the organization which became the United Automobile Workers (UAW). The newspaper was transferred to Detroit, Michigan and was renamed the United Automobile Worker. The Krauses also resettled in Detroit. There, Dorothy and Henry worked on the first major sit-down strike at Midland Steel in 1936. They also worked on strikes at Kelsey-Hayes and Fisher One in Flint, Michigan.

In these initial strikes, women's primary roles were the gathering and preparation of food for the strikers. Dorothy was active in organizing and supervising the kitchen work. Later, she helped organize UAW Women's Auxiliaries which assisted strikes and union elections throughout the area.

A constant debate over fundamental viewpoints of union organization created bitter feelings and sapped the strength of the union. The Krauses were disappointed in the result of their efforts and moved to Los Angeles in 1939. There Dorothy organized workers at Vultee Aircraft and Henry began writing a book about the strikes. Later the Krauses moved to San Pedro and lived in a housing project until the end of WWII. Dorothy organized a nursery for children and later a medical clinic and other worker-oriented projects, but was opposed by some of the local professional and business interests.

In the 1950's the Krauses were blacklisted and red-baited for their union activities. They moved to France in the midst of the McCarthy era and have lived there ever since. Both Dorothy and Henry express disappointment at American unions' failure to fight for workers. They feel that American unions would benefit from greater worker participation and interest.

The Krauses have published five books, The Many and the Few, and In the City was a Garden, The Living Theater of Medieval Art, The Hidden World of Misericords, and Gold was the Mortar, as well as numerous articles. Only the Hidden World carries both Dorothy's and Henry's names as co-authors, but Dorothy's help has been invaluable, especially in the preparation of The Many and the Few and In the City was a Garden.

Oral History Interview

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September 7, 1978

by

Patricia Yeghissian

INTERVIEWER: We're here in the Kraus home in Paris, France, with Dorothy and Henry Kraus, and myself, Pat Yeghissian, to do an interview. Okay, Dorothy a little bit later we're going to get into your role in the Flint strike and some other of your union and organizing activities, but I'd like to go back to the beginning and just pick up on some very basic data, such as, where you were born.

KRAUS: Well, that's not as important--where I was born--as the important factor in my life which is the fact that I come from a working class family. My father was a house painter and he came to the United States and this is the only kind of work he could get, so he became a house painter. And the entire atmosphere at home was that we are working class children and that, I think, helped me a great deal to understand the social circumstances of the time; and the same thing was true of my sisters.

INTERVIEWER: How, or why?

KRAUS: How? Well, both my mother and father, especially my mother, were politically conscious. She read a great deal, and while she wasn't active and she didn't participate after she came to the United States--there was the language difficulty and the situation of being a greenhorn, and all of that--nevertheless she read and she knew the social circumstances. And as a matter of fact she was the one who helped my father a great deal in understanding the political and the social situation in the country.

MR. KRAUS: Well, wasn't she a Bundist also in Poland?

KRAUS: In Poland she was a Bundist . . .

INTERVIEWER: What's a Bundist?

KRAUS: It's a Socialist, a Jewish Socialist. It was before the Bolsheviks, and this was the expression that they always used in those days.

MR. KRAUS: The Social-Democratic Party was a sort of federation of national groups, I believe.

KRAUS: So that had a great deal to do with my upbringing. And then, of course, I think the fact that I met Henry while young. I was still in high school when I met Henry, and this was a sort of a great and lasting love affair. And so we have to bring that in, too. And Henry's background was even more towards the left or towards the understanding of the political situation of the time. We were all very much attuned towards politics. For example, I'll never forget the time when, I was in high school then, and what do you call this military training the boys were asked to...?

MR. KRAUS: The R.O.T.C.

KRAUS: The R.O.T.C., which stands for [Reserve Officers Training Corps]. I think I was in the ninth grade or something like that, tenth grade maybe, the students in that particular Glenville High School, we went out, we absolutely went out and we said, "We're not going to be present when the government is going to force the boys to take R.O.T.C." And oh, it was a cause celebre, you know! And the boys, there were some who were opposed. But then of course some of them were for it. And I mean this gives you an example already that early [on] we were so conscious of what was going on. Then after finishing high school. . .

INTERVIEWER: Okay,let me jump back for a minute. When did your parents come to the States?

KRAUS: My father came before, and a long time before, and then my mother came in 1920.

MR. KRAUS: He came before the First World War. He was caught here and they were just on their way. . .

KRAUS: We were on our way.

MR. KRAUS: To come to New York.

KRAUS: I was born in Poland, Poland now. It was Russia, Germany, Poland--it changed hands just about every couple of years. And we remained--my sister, my baby sister, my mother and I--remained through the war years in Poland, and we came to the states in 1920.

INTERVIEWER: When you said your mother was active in Poland, in this Jewish party?

KRAUS: [You couldn't be really "active" in Poland as a Jew in the village where we lived, it was impossible. But there were other places where Jewish Socialists were very active.] Because we lived.... The Jews were in the ghetto, really. But she knew what was happening through little pieces of news-

KRAUS: papers that used to come her way, and because she was one of the few who knew how to read. She used to read out loud to little groups, books that were brought. And also by word of mouth, [that's how] the information came around. Now what she was like when she was a young girl I don't remember, and I never discussed it with her, unfortunately. But I know that during the time, during the war, she was very interested and actually one of the things she was sorry about was that when the Red Army came through our city she--and many young people left to go with the Red Army--she, I remember her saying that if she didn't have children, she would have gone with them.

INTERVIEWER: She was quite a lady. Now, jumping ahead a few years. When you talk about her reading a lot of political things, and explaining them to your father, did she also explain what she was reading to her children, or did you just sort of pick it up? Was there an active attempt to educate you?

KRAUS: No, there was no active attempt. She was terribly ill when she came [to the United States], and soon after it was an entire different situation. First of all, I was becoming a young lady already and I was growing up and as I said, the language problem was very difficult. And in those days to be a greenhorn was really something awful. We came to Cleveland, Ohio. We lived in a gentile neighborhood; nobody could speak to her because they couldn't communicate with her. And so she used to go for miles and miles on a streetcar to a Jewish neighborhood because that was the only place that she could communicate and also buy certain foods that she was acquainted with. She wasn't acquainted with, as they said, the "goyische" --gentile--foods, you know, in a neighborhood. So it became.... It was a difficult period for her until she learned some English. She didn't try to influence us, she didn't try that at all, and actually the family never tried to influence the children. They only wanted us to be good children. They wanted us to learn. That was the main thing: just to go to school as long as we could. Which of course was the dream of every immigrant parent that came to America. And that's what happened. We were left alone, we went to school, we did our work, we became interested in a lot of things. I especially became interested in music and I became a music student. And I studied music for many, many years. But meeting Henry changed a great deal of my life and, of course, as one grows up you meet many friends, and we had some wonderful friends, all of them very advanced educationally and actually politically.

INTERVIEWER: And these were friends that you met in high school and those early years?

KRAUS: In high school, and for example, one of them was Joe Friend. Joe Friend, also from Cleveland, Ohio, was a very fine writer, and he became [Professor of English at Cleveland College]; eventually he worked on the big dictionary that the World Publishing Company put out. Then we met. . .

MR. KRAUS: Of course, you were the one who met these people, I didn't know them at that time.

KRAUS: That's right, you didn't know them.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

MR. KRAUS: We lived in different places, we went to different schools, we had different backgrounds.

KRAUS: Well, Henry was advanced. Henry was already, you were already in college when I met you, you see.

MR. KRAUS: I was graduating when I met you.

KRAUS: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: From college?

MR. KRAUS: From Western Reserve.

INTERVIEWER: How did you two meet then?

KRAUS: We met at a musical performance at the Cleveland Museum of Art. That's where we met and that's the way it happened.

INTERVIEWER: And this is while you were in high school?

KRAUS: Yes, I was in high school, I was finishing high school when I met Henry.

INTERVIEWER: Other than this incident with the R.O.T.C. were there any other kinds of political events you were involved in in those early years?

KRAUS: No, that was really the only specific thing that .... Because not many things were happening in those days that I can remember. This was a specific thing that we could get ourselves attached to.

MR. KRAUS: 1925 was a period of great quiescence as far as social and political activity among young people, and in the country itself; because there had been quite a lot of disturbance

MR. KRAUS: in the postwar period, in 1919 particularly. And this, of course, I went through, we went through in the family.

INTERVIEWER: What was that?

MR. KRAUS: Well, there was a May Day demonstration in Cleveland [in 1919] as well as in all the big cities, by the left; and it was decided by the powers that be--and it must have been a national decision, I think all kinds of books have been written about it--to smash these meetings because there was a danger of.... See, this was right after the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik [Revolution of] 1917, just a year following, a year and a half. And my family were all in the parade. There were hundreds upon hundreds of cops, plus a lot of R.O.T.C. boys and some soldiers, or ex-soldiers who ganged up and attacked that parade in Cleveland. This took place in other places also. [They] beat up, broke up the big parade. Oh there must have been several tens of thousands in the parade, they were headed for the meeting place [probably at the Public Square downtown] where there would be speakers. And [they] arrested hundreds. And many of them were held and finally deported, a large number.

INTERVIEWER: Did this happen to any of your friends, your family friends?

MR. KRAUS: I really don't remember anymore, I don't know, but I'm quite sure that there were people that my folks knew that were deported. My father was not arrested, he was able to get away. The whole family hid in a candy store and my father bought pop for the family, to act as a disguise in case the cops came in.

INTERVIEWER: Let me clarify then, the police attacked the marchers.

MR. KRAUS: Oh yes, police plus the system.

KRAUS: It was orders.

MR. KRAUS: This was when J. Edgar Hoover became famous. Well it was Palmer really, the Attorney General Palmer, who was in charge. You know, the FBI was always attached to the Attorney General's office. And they were called the Palmer raids: the anti-red raids. And many thousands were deported at that time and I know my father expected to be. My father was a barber-- I might as well go on with it--he was a barber and a radical. He was a union man, and a very strong union man. Had been in several strikes as a barber in New York.

INTERVIEWER: Were the barbers organized?

MR. KRAUS: Well yes, they were organized, sort of loosely organized under the IWW, the Wobblies. And there were all kinds of stories in the family about that. One particular big strike in which thousands of barbers marched with their white smocks, for example. My mother always would say it was so beautiful, the way they appeared in this demonstration. I don't really remember the full details, I was too young but I know that he was so militant that he was victimized--he and some of his friends--so he couldn't get any jobs any more.

INTERVIEWER: Blacklisted?

MR. KRAUS: Blacklisted, so that my family had to leave the city of New York, and they went to Knoxville, Tennessee. I don't know why they chose Knoxville anymore really, but that was where I was born. My mother was carrying me when they went. But my mother couldn't stand it there because of the way that the black people were treated, she just couldn't take it, and my father didn't like it either, so they stayed only a few months and they went back to New York. By this time they were hoping that the thing had blown over, which probably it was. But he always was a union man, always active. Finally we moved to Cleveland because of economic conditions.

INTERVIEWER: Because work was easier?

MR. KRAUS: Work . . .

INTERVIEWER: To find?

MR. KRAUS: Yes, to go out into the sticks; we thought it was the country. Cleveland had five hundred thousand people but we thought.... I was just a little tyke of course, and I told all my friends, "Oh, we're going to live in the country." And there were trees and grass on Cleveland's streets.

KRAUS: Grass and maybe even a couple of cows.

MR. KRAUS: But there my father, of course, was still a barber and he became active in the union, in the local union, and he was the recording secretary for most of his life in that local. And also of course active in the socialist movement there. The whole family was--which led up to the 1919 situation.

INTERVIEWER: And how old were you at the time of the 1919?

MR. KRAUS: In 1919 I was fourteen years old. I was in high school. Of course, there was very bad repression, at least in spirit. The teachers all got involved. They all really looked at us

MR. KRAUS: with suspicion, and ostracized us for a while even though I was a very good student and all that. For a while it was touch and go. My friend Sam Yellen--whose father was a leader of the socialist movement, he was secretary of the Ohio Socialist Party --was called in by the principal and held there for several hours. He tells about it in one of his stories. Sam and I, we got to know each other not only in high school--we were in the same high school--but we were in the YPSL together (Young People's Socialist League) and we got to know each other and liked each other very much. And this was the kind of background I had. In other words, all that was natural for me. It was just an ordinary thing: unions, party, and so on. These were things that were part of the daily bread. But of course when we met, Dorothy and I, it was a different period. It was a period, how do I put it? Sort of a cooling off, sort of a normalization, a period of prosperity. It was the period of Coolidge and Hoover. So that was when we met. We both discovered that we wanted to go to Europe.

INTERVIEWER: One minute. Now, did you go to college, Dorothy?

KRAUS: Yes, I went to Western Reserve and all the time while we were there I found that I had to work in order to help out and in order to help myself because, as you know, with a father who is only a painter, the income was not terribly great. So I worked as a playground teacher in the summer. And I got the job because I was so small and so thin that nobody else would have given me a job. But I got it through political pull, and this is the way it came about. I got a job counting votes. You know, in those days they didn't have the machines; you counted each by number. And in my precinct, or in our precinct, I got the job to count votes and the person [Councilman] who won--I don't remember his name--was so grateful to us for counting the votes. I don't know whether maybe he thought we cheated or maybe he thought we gave him the better counting; I don't know, I thought we were very honest. But anyway, he asked us, the few people that were working, "If there is anything that we can do for you, don't forget to come to us." Well, the time came when I thought I had to have some kind of a job and so I went and I asked his secretary. I never got to see him, he was too busy. And I told her what I wanted to do, that I wanted to work as a playground teacher for the summer, for the summer months. And sure enough that's what I got. I got an appointment to work in a playground as a playground teacher. But the boys in the neighborhood that I worked at [were pretty rough]. Things became difficult for me because I was so small and they didn't pay any attention; there was no question of having discipline, anything like that. But it was a really helluva job that I had. But I stuck it out.

KRAUS: I worked several summers that way and all the time I was saving the money. And my folks knew it and they were in agreement, so that when the time came we were able to use part of this money to go to Europe. But I also became a very active member of the Cleveland Playhouse. The Cleveland Playhouse still exists, and it was one of the very good "little theater" groups that became so famous in the United States during those years. And the Cleveland Playhouse started in a little church and those of us who were interested in theater and in music became active, and we helped the promotion of the Cleveland Playhouse in that little church in a Negro neighborhood. It was on Central, and anybody who knows Cleveland and knows where Central Avenue was, and they'll know what I'm talking about. So you see culturally we really became advanced. We became interested in music. We got all kinds of other people interested in music. We even got one of the professors to start a course [he was Arthur W. Quimby, Curator of Music at the Art Museum] to help us interpret the musical events that were coming to Cleveland. And Cleveland was a rich city. It had many rich patrons. Cleveland had a good symphony orchestra very early when other cities probably didn't have the same attention. Cleveland had a theater.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the money from in Cleveland?

KRAUS: Well, the Hannah family was one of them. Rockefeller also came from Cleveland.

MR. KRAUS: The Severance family.

KRAUS: The Severances also came from Cleveland, so these people donated money. For example, the Cleveland Library has some of the finest collections on art and other. . .

MR. KRAUS: Cleveland was the only city also for a number of years that could afford to bring the Metropolitan Opera once a year.

KRAUS: For a whole week of performances.

MR. KRAUS: And, of course, we went everyday.

KRAUS: I got a job ushering so that I could hear every opera that appeared. So all of that helped us to develop our desire to go to Europe. On my part it was absolutely by myself and then when I met Henry I realized we had so much in common, that he had the same aspirations.

INTERVIEWER: What were your reasons?

MR. KRAUS: Well, I wanted to write. I had wanted to write for quite a long time. And I was scared about starting so I thought if I

MR. KRAUS: went to Europe, to France, I would be inspired. And of course when I got there I was just as scared or even more so than ever. But nevertheless I did start writing.

INTERVIEWER: You two did come together then?

MR. KRAUS: Yes, of course,we were married.

KRAUS: We got married.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, then when did you get married?

MR. KRAUS: We got married in . . .

KRAUS: Well, never mind, that's a military secret.

MR. KRAUS: We got married two years after we met.

KRAUS: A couple of years later, we got married.

MR. KRAUS: Oh, I don't see why you have to be so [secretive].

INTERVIEWER: Did you finish college?

KRAUS: No, I didn't, only two years.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

KRAUS: Henry finished.

MR. KRAUS: The way I saved money was through teaching. I taught junior high school. I taught math, math had been my subject. I had already put it aside even though I had gotten my degree in it. But I wanted to write and Dorothy wanted to study music and we came here and since I had--I don't know if we should go into all of this detail.

KRAUS: No, it's not important, no.

MR. KRAUS: But we came here anyway . . .

KRAUS: This should be covered when you do this over.

MR. KRAUS: We gave everything else up and studied art.

INTERVIEWER: You did as well?

KRAUS: We did, we studied art--that is, from the amateur's standpoint. And this is the very beginning of it. But while we were here the Depression started back home and we came back to the depths of the Depression.

INTERVIEWER: So what year was that?

MR. KRAUS: This was in [July] 1930 that we came back to Cleveland.

INTERVIEWER: How many years were you in Paris?

MR. KRAUS: [Almost] two years, and throughout Europe, western Europe.

KRAUS: We might tell you that we did Europe on one dollar a day.

INTERVIEWER: I don't want to hear it!

KRAUS: One dollar a day.

MR. KRAUS: Of course then it was much cheaper.

KRAUS: Even then it was terrible, because by the end I weighed eighty-eight pounds and Henry weighed ninety-eight pounds.

MR. KRAUS: No, I was a little more than that.

KRAUS: Okay, a hundred and two pounds or something like that.

MR. KRAUS: Anyway,we came back to Cleveland and. . .

INTERVIEWER: Why to Cleveland?

MR. KRAUS: Well, it was our home.

KRAUS: Our families were there.

MR. KRAUS: We stayed with our families for a little while, and then we got a little place in a garret and we fixed an apartment there. And we both did a little work.

KRAUS: Since with my connection, you see, I had--I'm jumping around perhaps. You see, I already had done quite a bit of work in the theater with the Cleveland Playhouse, and with my music that I had studied I got a job with the Cleveland YWCA. And a wonderful director there, woman, absolutely marvelous director, suggested--and I was very happy about it--that I work with the working girls who were just starting to work or were looking for a job. And we did a stupendous piece of work. We wrote our own plays, and we performed them. The pay was very, very little, of course, because it was just a few hours a week. But nevertheless it was the most interesting work and that was the beginning of my attachment to working girls, and women.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you form a connection?

KRAUS: I just wanted--I couldn't tell you right exactly why, but I felt that these people needed help. And I said to myself that would be the most wonderful thing to try to see what you can do with these young girls. Of course I was pretty young myself, but they were even younger. And we did, I still have notes, and I still have some of the little skits, sketches that we performed. And I remember once we played for quite a group of visitors. They were wealthy women who were supposed to be interested in social work. I didn't talk to any of them but I knew that they were pleased. They were probably members of an important committee at the YWCA. In any case, they must have been satisfied with what we were doing becase I continued working there for two years.

INTERVIEWER: Did you run the themes of the sketches, were they employee, working class?

KRAUS: Yes, they were working class. They always dealt with some instance of their experiences: something that they did, something that the boss objected to, or something that they weren't doing so well. It always dealt with their problems. And of course we always tried to lighten it, to make it humorous and to make it interesting. And it worked out beautifully.

INTERVIEWER: Were there many working class girls that took part in the Y's programs?

KRAUS: Well, there were those that I had, maybe there were many more that I wasn't in touch with. I had anywhere from twenty to thirty girls that participated off and on. Sometimes they would drop out because something happened in the family or they couldn't come to rehearsals or they couldn't come to meetings. And others would come in later on. But on the whole that was about the number that I had, between twenty and thirty.

INTERVIEWER: Was there ever any discussion among these girls about unionization? I mean, did they make the connection that their problems were such that an organization could make a difference in their lives?

KRAUS: We did talk about unionization, but unionization was still far off for women in those days. These were all newcomers to the industries. I remember a paper mill that they worked in. And where else did they work, do you remember?

MR. KRAUS: Gee, I don't remember.

KRAUS: I'll have to look at my notes.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, never mind. Were they primarily immigrants?

KRAUS: No, no, no, they were Americans. Their parents were immigrants. There were some Hungarians, there were some Poles, and I remember one or two boys--Italians--that were absolutely charming. They were friends and the boys came in afterwards. There were not as many as the girls.

MR. KRAUS: As I remember it was on the west side of Cleveland.

KRAUS: What was her name, Schwenkemeyer?

MR. KRAUS: Schwenkemeyer.

KRAUS: Schwenkemeyer was the Directress of. . .

INTERVIEWER: The Y?

KRAUS: Of this particular, the industrial division of the Y.

INTERVIEWER: Was this west side of Cleveland, was it the working class side?

MR. KRAUS: Yes, if you didn't go very far out on the west side, you were just in the center there. It's very working class. West 25th Street, around there.

INTERVIEWER: So now what were you doing while she was working at the Y?

MR. KRAUS: Well, since I knew languages, I worked as a translator, for the Cleveland Clinic, as a medical translator. The main point: we were earning enough to get by, things were very cheap.

KRAUS: We were living with our family, with my family.

MR. KRAUS: Well, no, no. I'm talking about when we were working already and pretty soon after, we got this little garret. We earned maybe twenty dollars a week between us and we were able to run things that way.

INTERVIEWER: Were you involved in any political activities?

MR. KRAUS: I had been writing. And I had an idea for a novel--you know, every writer wants to write a great novel. However, I was dissatisfied with my writing and I shelved it. I felt that I didn't know the proper people. I really should get to know the working class people, the roots. This was already in 1933, a little bit after the middle of the year. And I said, "By gosh, I'm going to." There was this big NRA drive among the workers everywhere, Roosevelt's plan to organize the workers. It was his idea that workers should organize and therefore be a strong balancing feature in the economy: labor, employers, government, sort of a corporate state, as he conceived of it.

MR. KRAUS: There was quite a lot of talk about organizing, even some strikes beginning. And I read somewhere that the White Motor Plant, which was one of the two biggest automobile plants in Cleveland--Fisher Body and White Motors--was going to have a strike. So I thought, "I'm going to go down there and see."

INTERVIEWER: What year was this?

MR. KRAUS: This was in 1933, the end, or early 1934. And I went down and I found out that a man by the name of Wyndham Mortimer was the head negotiator and probably would be the strike leader. He wasn't the president of the local yet but he was the negotiating committee head. And I presented myself and I told him, "Look, I'm just a writer, an intellectual, but maybe I can help. You may not have anybody who can write publicity and I think I can, I worked on my high school paper, et cetera, et cetera." And so he said, "Sure." Well, the strike didn't take place but I stuck around anyway and I went to the union meetings. I've always been an organizationally-minded person. A bit later I said, "Look, I'll tell [you] what I'll do. After each meeting,"--they had bi-weekly meetings--"I'll write something up and I'll take it down to the Cleveland Plain Dealer,"--which was the morning paper--"and give it as a report." And of course, in those days the papers wouldn't say a word about union activities. And by gosh, they did. They'd publish a little item of an inch or two. And so the union was interested and happy about [it] and I would even be called on at times to make a report of my publicity activities. And then, of course, Mortimer--I found him a fascinating man, a wonderful guy, and we became friends. I'm not going to go into detail, I'll write a book about that. But Mortimer was always interested in making contact with other plants--and there were a number of auto parts plants in Cleveland. Well, I got involved also and one day I said to Mortimer, "Why don't we put out a little paper? I could do the work and maybe we could get a little money through ads."

KRAUS: All of this was done gratis.

MR. KRAUS: Finally that is what happened. I became editor of the United Auto Worker and also we had formed a Cleveland Auto Council, with nine or ten local unions. Everybody worked for nothing. The fellows would go out and get an ad for a dollar from, near each of the plants--the saloons, as we called them--or restaurants. And for about sixty-five or seventy dollars a month we could put out these papers. Well, soon we noticed that there were all kinds of requests for the paper from other cities coming in. Would you please send us a hundred copies, or even five hundred or a thousand copies? We were just stunned. So we'd say, "Alright, if you'll pay a dollar and a half or three dollars." And pretty soon we began to be known all over the country.

MR. KRAUS: Also.... I'm not going to tell the whole story here of how we became active and made contact. We were all in the AF of L, but the AFL was not interested in having the union movement grow, they were scared of this movement among the mass production workers. This was an old story.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

MR. KRAUS: Because the AF of L was dominated by the craft unions. And they were scared of [mass production workers] because they were foreigners, and they didn't smell good, as they would say to us! And they were radical,at least there was a danger of their being radical, since they were foreigners, people that they didn't understand, they didn't know. In any case, it's a long story--and a tremendous one--of how we continued to fight, and especially for an independent international union for all auto workers organized on an industrial basis. The AF of L's idea was to organize all these big plants into federal locals, and then to divide them up. Machinists would go the Machinists International, the painters to another international, the carpenters to another. They had eight or ten or twelve unions that were going to grab the workers. There exists all kinds of evidence of this, there's no question that this was their goal. Finally, the strikes began to erupt here and there, important strikes.

INTERVIEWER: Throughout Cleveland?

MR. KRAUS: In Cleveland also. In 1934--the first year that I was involved --there was a Fisher Body strike in Cleveland which was broken by the AF of L. The men were forced back to work, and the union went almost to pot. There was a strike in Toledo, the Autolite Strike, which was a victory, even though there were a couple of pickets killed. And then in 1935, we had in Cleveland a number of strikes. And we were much better established and by this time also the AF of L realized that they had to give us some kind of an international union. And finally when they did give it to us, in mid-1935, they appointed all the officers and all the board members, and this we wouldn't stand for. So we continued to agitate. Then the CIO came into the picture at the end of 1935 and the AF of L realized that they couldn't hold us any longer and they called for an international convention at which we took over. Homer Martin was elected the first president, Mort [Mortimer] was the first vice president, I became the editor. And this is the way we moved to Detroit. Actually my paper, the United Auto Worker, was transferred over to Detroit, and became the United Automobile Worker and I became the first editor. Homer Martin didn't like it, but he had no choice.

INTERVIEWER: Now were you [Dorothy]aware of all this organizing?

KRAUS: Oh yes, indeed I was. (laughter) Indeed I was. But I have to go back a little earlier. Let's see, when was it that I started the People's Theater?

MR. KRAUS: In 1935.

KRAUS: In 1935. A group of us young people interested in the theater wanted to do something about it, so we got the idea of organizing a people's theater, that's what we called it. We were able to get hold of the barns that Rockefeller had used for his. . .

MR. KRAUS: No, it wasn't the barns, it was the. . .

KRAUS: It was the upstairs, the barn was downstairs and the upstairs was a loft.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, but it was a garage.

KRAUS: So we were able to rent that for very little, and we got enough money together. Actually, everybody contributed, and we had two wonderful women architects, who did marvelous benches and seats and everything else for us. And they built the stage and the proscenium, and the few lights that we needed. Now the next problem was where do we get good [acting] material? It was asking a little bit too much for us to become a professional theater and to write our own plays. So I went to New York. Did we go together?

MR. KRAUS: I think so.

KRAUS: I guess we went to New York and there we met the. . .

MR. KRAUS: The Worker's Lab Theatre.

KRAUS: The Worker's Lab Theatre in which a number of very fine people participated. One of them, as a matter of fact, is now acting in the children's program on channel 13. What's his name? Willie. . .

MR. KRAUS: Will Lee.

KRAUS: Will Lee is with the--what is the children's thing that is so famous in the States?

INTERVIEWER: Sesame Street?

KRAUS: Sesame Street! Well, Will Lee was one of them, Ann Howe, and a number of other people. So they introduced us to, the man who wrote Waiting for Lefty.

MR. KRAUS: Odets.

KRAUS: Clifford Odets! Clifford Odets was already quite famous in New York because he had written several plays and he was rather haughty with us because we were just beginning and we didn't have the standing that New York had. And he wasn't sure that he would let us use his plays. So we got a few things that were written by other people and we went back and we started working on those plays.

MR. KRAUS: Also Irwin Shaw's Bury the Dead.

KRAUS: Yes, Bury the Dead was another one. We lived at that time very close to the theater. And one day I was walking down Euclid Avenue, which is the main street of Cleveland, and a young, tall, lanky chap approached me. And he says to me, "Would you know where the People's Theater is?" I looked at him, and it was almost as if somebody had been sending messages from heaven. I said, "Yes, I do. But why do you want the People's Theater?" He said, "Well, I'm interested in doing some work with them." I said, "That's wonderful. You just hit upon the right person." And I said, "Who are you?" And he said, "I'm Howard da Silva." Well, Howard da Silva became a fixture. He was out of work and so he came to Cleveland--his father lived in Cleveland--to visit his father, and he heard of the People's Theater. And from then on we had a real theater, but also a lot of headaches.

MR. KRAUS: He became the director as well as an actor.

KRAUS: He became the director, naturally, as well as the leading actor, and we did give a number of very fine performances. However, that wasn't the [real] goal that we had. We had a good audience which was mostly friends of friends or family and sort of left-wing people that were interested in seeing these things. But what Henry and I wanted was to perform for the workers in the shops. And this is where we had a lot of trouble. First of all the unions at that time weren't willing to accept us. Theater to begin with was something way off. Besides, we'd have to get permission--not only from the unions--but we'd have to get permission from the companies to come into the [plants]. But we did have one terrific break, due to the fact that Henry was the editor of the paper and that Mr. Mortimer -- Wyndham Mortimer--was a good friend. So the next big thing that happened to us was that we were asked to perform Bury the Dead. Was it that?

MR. KRAUS: [No], it was a play that Albert Maltz had written, a one-act play. I forget what it was called, but it was actually based on the Autolite Stike.

KRAUS: What was it called? Isn't that funny?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, it doesn't matter.

KRAUS: Well, we should know the name of the play.

MR. KRAUS: Anyway, it was a short play and it was given. The thing is that--I'll say it real fast here--you may have forgotten that you also performed for the Cleveland Federation [of Labor].

KRAUS: Oh, that's right, I had forgotten.

INTERVIEWER: Federation of Labor?

MR. KRAUS: It was a rather conservative organization, but by this time we of the Auto Council had become active there. We still hadn't gone to Detroit, we still hadn't taken over the international union.

KRAUS: Were there good remarks about it?

MR. KRAUS: Oh yes, you performed for the delegates. There was an audience of a hundred fifty or so. It was a small skit that dealt with a strike conducted by guards working for The Brinks Company, who transported bank funds. And then of course, the important thing is that since we were taking the lead in the CIO movement we . . .

INTERVIEWER: What was your . . .

MR. KRAUS: I mean the Cleveland Council and the group of leaders in it. We arranged for the very first meeting of the new CIO organ ization with John L. Lewis as our main speaker. It was in January 1936. We hired the public auditorium for this and it was fantastic. I remember it was frigid cold, but we had a full house and we scheduled the People's Theater to give this play. We had a big battle--and this was only my first one with Adolph Germer--on whether [to give a play]. He said, "Oh nonsense!" And I said I think this should be a full program and I won. And the thing is that Lewis had to speak last, and here was this frigid weather. It was a Sunday night and it was getting late and the workers wanted to go home and they had long distances to go. And Germer was absolutely right. [He was the CIO's head representative at the time]. It was too long of a play and they dragged it out, and when we started seeing people moving out we told Howard da Silva, "For God's sake, cut it short," and Lewis, I know, was burning up.

KRAUS: I could see Lewis in the back, going back and forth like this--"humph, humph." But anyway, we performed and this was the glory for us. We really became quite famous after that among

KRAUS: the workers. We would say, "We'll schedule something for your meeting." We didn't get many performances like that, but a few of them we did. But unfortunately soon after we ran into something, the Federal Theater Project, and that's where we were bought out, actually that's what it amounted to.

INTERVIEWER: Do you want to explain that?

KRAUS: Yes, I can explain that.

MR. KRAUS: Do you really want this detail?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

KRAUS: It's just--I'm not going to mention names, there's no point. The Federal Theater Project as it was conceived was to buy up all progressive actors.

MR. KRAUS: Well, not buy up, hire them.

KRAUS: Well, I'm calling them. . .

MR. KRAUS: Well, buying has a . . .

KRAUS: Oh, it has another connotation? Alright. Hire, and this was wonderful, actually, for the actors because most of them were out of work. So they started with the Little Theater movements, and they immediately poured money into the Playhouse, and at the same time they hired most of our people. So that our people dispersed.

MR. KRAUS: Well, they did't hire most, they hired the key actors.

KRAUS: Well, the key people. Howard was hired and Lee Marvin was hired and a few others. I'm not going to mention others, it doesn't matter. So that we were left with just a few people and they were just beginners. And it was really a sad situation, and we realized after struggling and struggling for about six more months that we just had to give it up.

MR. KRAUS: Besides, we were going away.

KRAUS: Yes, we were going away.

INTERVIEWER: So it kind of coincided.

KRAUS: Yes, but I think I wouldn't have left, if it had continued. At least I would have continued staying until somebody else could have taken over. But it was impossible.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask one last question on the People's Theater. The actors, were they just people living in Cleveland?

KRAUS: Just people in Cleveland.

INTERVIEWER: And were they working class people, some of them?

KRAUS: Some of them, yes. There was Tim Baar who became a Hollywood set designer, and won Oscars--one Oscar anyway that I know of --and his wife, she was from a working class family. And others. Yes, we were mostly children of the working class.

MR. KRAUS: And this is right after the Depression, too, 1935, remember, just a couple years out of the Depression.

KRAUS: And there was Naomi Schwartz [who] is from Cleveland and became a very fine actress and made a fine film.

MR. KRAUS: Of course, she's not working class, we're talking about working class backgrounds. But there was Joe O'Neill.

KRAUS: Yes, Joe O'Neill was a worker himself. And John Daugherty, who was his friend.

INTERVIEWER: So now you moved then to Detroit in 19__?

MR. KRAUS: 1936, in May of 1936.

INTERVIEWER: So that's just a few months before the Flint strike.

MR. KRAUS: Oh boy, and how!

KRAUS: Too close.

INTERVIEWER: When you first moved to Detroit was there any thought that Flint would break that quickly?

MR. KRAUS: That is a big part of the argument that's going on now: was it spontaneous or planned? And the point is that anything as tremendous as that strike can't have been planned [in all its details]. But as I said it in the book, it couldn't have been won without a combination of circumstances, very favorable circumstance. Without them, had it been won it would have been as the result of bloodshed and much more suffering. But this is the way history is made. Circumstances must also be taken into consideration, not only people's thoughts and plans. And this is what did happen. In Flint in the auto industry, there were things like this alert and militant new group that took over the union. And there was the liberal

MR. KRAUS: administration: Frank Murphy was the governor, Roosevelt was the president, and Frances Perkins was the labor department head, Secretary of Labor. The fact that the LaFollette Committee was involved, came in there and exposed stoolpigeons and spies, also helped enormously. And the fact that the Black Legion had just then been exposed as a more dangerous and rabid kind of Ku Klux Klan. You may not have heard of it, the Black Legion.

INTERVIEWER: No. Would you explain a little bit about the Black Legion?

MR. KRAUS: The Black Legion was a group that was established mainly in Michigan, though it also had ties in Indiana and a little bit in Ohio, a fascistic group set up under company assistance and encouragement.

INTERVIEWER: Company? Do you mean auto company?

MR. KRAUS: Auto company [and others],Ford in particular. The members were gun-toting, vicious, reactionary guys. In most cases workers, workers but fascistic-minded Ku Klux Klanners and also anti-union, there was plenty of proof of that. I don't know if there were any books ever written about that, but there's plenty of material in articles and such like. It all was exposed when a trigger man by the name of Dean, I think, Dayton Dean, who had killed somebody, was caught and confessed.

INTERVIEWER: What was their primary purpose?

MR. KRAUS: Primary purpose was the Ku Klux Klan line.

INTERVIEWER: To persecute blacks?

MR. KRAUS: Blacks, Jews, foreigners.

KRAUS: Any foreign nationality.

MR. KRAUS: For instance, they killed a black chap. They said--they had been drinking--and they said,"Let's get us a"--many of them were southerners-- "Let's get us a coon." And they found just by accident a guy who'd been visiting his sweetheart and they killed him. Well, they were exposed. There was this Dayton Dean--just for publicity, he just loved the publicity he was getting evidently--he revealed his role and then he involved all kinds of other people. It was pretty much squelched finally, but nevertheless enough came out to help us. Because we had some of them in Flint. I mentioned them [in the book], at Fisher One. And it was very fortunate that we were able to push these guys out of any possible role in the strike. It also helped some of the left-wingers

MR. KRAUS: and the others to take the roles that they assumed. Because they were scared frequently of what the Black Legion might do to them. There was even one case of a Black Legionnaire, a woman who was in Fisher, she was a forelady, who was seen making robes for them, KKK robes.

INTERVIEWER: So there were women in the Legionnaires, also.

KRAUS: Yes, but you started telling about the . . .

MR. KRAUS: Well, there were all these things, these positive elements, but most important of all was the fact that there was this group of young leaders who were anxious to do something, and who were willing to take big personal risks.

INTERVIEWER: And who were these young leaders?

MR. KRAUS: Well, Mortimer wasn't so young but there were people like the Reuthers, like John Anderson, like Nat Ganley, like all kinds of different people, and Bob Travis who was brought into Flint. And in Detroit, there were.... Dick Frankensteen, let's not forget him, very important. And others, there were many who were really raring to go. And we had all had quite a lot of experience by this time. We had the defeats that had taken place behind us so that we knew what not to do. And also the fact that we did have some kind of historic basis for our work because there were left-wing elements, among us, who had read and knew something about the history of labor.

KRAUS: And other strikes.

MR. KRAUS: And then of course another element that I didn't mention was the fact that the French had carried out their big sit-downs shortly before.

KRAUS: The first sit-downs.

MR. KRAUS: It was in 1936 that the French Popular Front won out, and for the first time in a long time they had a government that was left wing--that meant Socialist, Communists and so on--and the workers got impatient and they said, "Alright, we won politically. That's not enough. We want our conditions." They pulled those big sit-down strikes, the whole idea just struck us like magic, because we realized that this new type of strike was made to order for us. Because the danger for us was not only that the laws were all stacked against us but the police too--not only in Michigan but in other states as well but particularly in Michigan--were controlled by the companies.

KRAUS: The companies, stool pigeons. .

MR. KRAUS: Their cops were in control. And therefore we thought since we aren't allowed to strike or picket, since it is against the law in Michigan, so we'll.... We'll just sit down! We're there already we're at our jobs, ready to go to work as soon as the company sees reason. So let's use this. We don't have to be worried about the cops because they wouldn't dare come in, besides we can protect ourselves inside. And as long as we're strong enough inside, even if we don't have a big majority --because the workers were too scared to join in many cases-- but nevertheless we would be strong enough.

INTERVIEWER: And why did you try it in Flint?

MR. KRAUS: Well, that was the whole point. We felt that it had to be-- and in this respect Adolph Germer agreed-- that if it was going to be something that would really organize the industry, it would have to be one of the big companies. It could not be Ford because we knew that Ford was too tremendously powerful.

KRAUS: Entrenched.

MR. KRAUS: And entrenched, and they had Harry Bennet and his goons, and we just knew that we couldn't beat Ford, not just yet, not until the union was much, much stronger. So it would have to be either Chrysler or General Motors. But we had no idea which it would be at first, whether it would be one or the other. We thought that General Motors would probably be the one because General Motors by all odds was the most prosperous of all the companies. And besides, we knew that we had some strength in Flint and in several of the other GM plants and we certainly had some in Cleveland Fisher Body , so that we could pull something like that if we worked hard and the time came. And that was the reason Mortimer chose Flint to start his activities in. Because he did choose it, consciously and voluntarily. And some people in the union thought he was crazy.

When he started, he conducted his organizational activities entirely on the quiet because there were only 120 members in the union out of 42,000 workers, and many of the 120 were not even working, and there were also a number of stool pigeons among them. We didn't know how many, but later on we found out quite a few that were through LaFollette Committee revelations. So that to have revealed new people that Mort had signed up in the union at the local meetings, as the stoolies demanded, would have been the surest way of getting them fired!

INTERVIEWER: When Mortimer was first going up to Flint, how did he originally organize, how did he make contact?

MR. KRAUS: Well, I think this is pretty well described in The Many and the Few, but in any case I can give you a short version of it. Since there was a danger of stool pigeons--Mortimer knew they were everywhere, and especially in the union, because this is always their point of concentration--he decided to do his organ izing secretly. He got a strong-box in a bank where he kept the signed union cards and the union account was in his own name so as to hide the success or lack of success that the organizing campaign was having. Some nasty things were said later on about the secret methods by Homer Martin, and they've even been picked up by some writers, inimical for some reason or other,saying that there was a problem with money and that Mort and Bob Travis particularly were loose with the union's money. Believe me if Martin could have proved it at the time he made his accusations, when he was getting rid of all his opponents, he would have done so! He said $200,000 had been spent by Mortimer and Travis. But that wasn't during the strike alone, when only a fraction of that amount was spent, little enough for so huge an enterprise.

INTERVIEWER: So how did he make his contacts, then?

MR. KRAUS: First he would get some names of workers who might be interested from those he knew who were in the union and whom he could trust. And these he began to write to. He put out a little bulletin, a letter, and I don't know how many copies of it, but I think those are in the collection at Wayne State, at least they were in my collection. And besides this letter he tried also to see them in person. Every worker who was a potential, a possible, was a treasure, and Mort would go to great lengths [to be able to meet them].

INTERVIEWER: Where did he arrange to see them?

MR. KRAUS: He would see them at their home usually, but since he was afraid of being tracked by stool pigeons, he would go around and around with his car, and finally if he felt that he wasn't being followed he would go to this person's home. Or it would be somebody else's home, the worker who introduced him, for example. And frequently there was more than just one, there would be two, three, four. And at times it was at a person's home whose wife was antagonistic--and this was frequently the case--and she might burst in and say that she wasn't going to see her husband get fired, and that they had had it hard enough, and where could you get another job, et cetera. So Mort realized that he had to reassure the women and he was very good at it--by talking to them, telling them about things, and then getting them involved by saying to them, "Well, look, we have a session here with a few fellows, and I brought some donuts or some cake," or something like that,"would you like

MR. KRAUS: to prepare tea or coffee or something?" And they would say, "Oh, I guess so." And getting her to do something would sort of soften the situation.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever go into any black homes?

MR. KRAUS: I didn't because I didn't go up until later. I was very busy down in Detroit at this time.

INTERVIEWER: Did Mort?

MR. KRAUS: Mort did, yes, because he told me about it, and not only that, but once to refresh my memory I wrote to him when I was doing the book and I asked him if he remembered anything like that. I said, "I remember that you told me about having gone into several black homes." And he wrote me at that time about one meeting--do you want me to put this in now? [It] was in a church, in what we called Negro in those days, a black church. There were quite a few workers there, from the foundry of Buick. And Mort explained the whole thing to them. To begin with he said, "You know that we realize your problems. You have all the difficulties that other workers have, and you have this extra one. And we realize that, we also realize the danger of your getting involved in the union because of your special situation. So we don't want you to stick your necks out, we'll let the white workers do that. And then when the time comes you will be able to play the role that you should, that is your right." So one worker got up and said he wanted to ask a question, "When you organize your union, are you going to have a special local for the blacks?" And Mortimer said, "Absolutely not, no Jim Crow locals for us."

INTERVIEWER: That's very significant, I imagine.

MR. KRAUS: That's terribly significant. Finally he said, "Now I've got these cards, if you want to sign them do so. They'll be kept secret. I put them in the vault. We've got a vault because we don't trust all of the people that are in the union now." So the minister at that point said that he thought that everybody should sign a card, and they did.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know who the minister was?

MR. KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any idea what church it was?

MR. KRAUS: No, I haven't, I have no idea.

INTERVIEWER: Was this meeting arranged by the minister?

MR. KRAUS: Yes, well, it was arranged through Henry Clark, I think, who was in the church.

INTERVIEWER: Who was Henry Clark?

MR. KRAUS: He was the leading black organizer in Flint, originally a voluntary organizer whom Mort had been able to contact through somebody or other. And eventually then things began to really buzz, because I think the blacks joined en masse at Buick. And Henry Clark was put on as a part time organizer.

INTERVIEWER: On the payroll?

MR. KRAUS: Well, he got maybe five or ten dollars a week or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: But he was paid.

MR. KRAUS: He was paid a little, a small amount, which was usual for a few people that did special work.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know where Henry Clark worked?

MR. KRAUS: In Buick.

INTERVIEWER: Where did most of the blacks work?

MR. KRAUS: In Buick, in the foundry. This was very tough work, very dirty and dangerous and there were health hazards--fumes and so on. The foundry was very backward in safety control at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Did Mort often hold meetings in churches, or was this a different tactic?

MR. KRAUS: Whenever he could. It was a rather different tactic, I think, and it was significant that it was blacks that were involved, because the black church has always played such a significant role in the social and even political history of the black people. It's much more down to earth, something like the worker priests of Europe, of France.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know, were there any, did you hold any other meetings in black churches.

MR. KRAUS: Not that I know of. I'm sure that there was something like that that took place, but I can't say for sure.

INTERVIEWER: I just want to reclarify one point. When you said that Mortimer said to the blacks that they take more risks and that they should sort of sit still, do you mean that he didn't want them to participate in the strike itself?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, no. Of course, not too many workers participated from other plants in the strike [the Buick plant was not on strike], but there were some blacks that came and served on the picket line occasionally. But Mort felt, when he said that they were in a--how shall we say--a more dangerous position, it was because of the fact that he knew that many of the whites still didn't have a good attitude towards blacks, and that they couldn't depend on the support of the whites until the union was strong. Of course after that they learned fast, that is, these white workers did. It made your head swim, at times, the way they learned. But early on, Mort didn't want the blacks to take unnecessary risks.

INTERVIEWER: Why was Mortimer interested in sort of organizing the blacks at this time if they really couldn't help him in the strike effort?

MR. KRAUS: Because this was the general outlook that we had. We wanted everybody in the union, and particularly blacks, because our whole vision was that the blacks should be helped, and they should be a part, and if they weren't organized then there would be problems later. And should we not bring them in, we didn't know what was going to come up in the future. We wanted--it was like the women we told you about in the Midland Steel, that a couple of guys there that were leaders were reactionaries, plus that one stool pigeon and they wanted to keep the women out. And they were kept out until the strike came. This is why Dorothy's role there was so significant, I feel. No, we wanted everybody. All workers had to be in, it was absolutely necessary.

INTERVIEWER: But was there a certain risk in it if you made attempts towards gaining blacks that you'd lose some whites?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, we didn't give a damn about that. Oh no, we made no compromise on that issue. They had to learn, they had to know we weren't going to compromise the way the AF of L did, all these opportunistic excuses. The workers could very easily learn and understand why it was important to have everybody. Of course, as I've said, there weren't many black workers altogether, except for the dirtiest, filthiest work--the foundry in Buick and janitors and such.

INTERVIEWER: Now this was all before the Flint strike.

MR. KRAUS: Months before.

KRAUS: Oh, long before.

MR. KRAUS: And then of course when Mortimer had to go out, when . . .

KRAUS: You mean leave.

MR. KRAUS: Leave because of all the agitation that the stoolies raised against him. There was a delegation of stool pigeons and reactionaries that actually went down to UAW headquarters in Detroit to raise hell against him. They were scared that they were going to lose their whole position in the Flint union, and they asked that Mortimer be removed because he was, as they said, building a "Red Empire" there. And Homer Martin called a meeting of the officers in regard to the question of removing Mort. And Mort wasn't even told of this! Here's the second in command, and he found out about it from Homer Martin's secretary, and so he came, and of course there was a big explosion. And Mort realized that he'd better give the job up anyway, but he wouldn't give it up to just anybody. Homer Martin had a man by the name of Fred Pieper that he wanted to put in there who was a very dubious kind of character who actually tried, not only tried, but did jump the gun by trying to get the strike going too soon, by provoking a shutdown in his own unimportant plant. We knew it couldn't succeed if it went too soon, and when he pulled that strike in Atlanta, he started agitating for other plants to follow suit. You must have heard about that.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. KRAUS: Fred Pieper, he was a board member. But Mort said, "Nothing doing. I won't go unless you get a good, solid guy in there, a guy like Bob Travis."

INTERVIEWER: And where did Mort know Bob Travis from?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, we knew him because he was involved in the big Chevy strike of 1935 in Toledo, and he had come to Cleveland. Actually we went there a couple of times while the strike was on and spoke to the strikers in the name of the Cleveland auto workers.

INTERVIEWER: When was this now that Travis came in?

MR. KRAUS: He came in at the end of September 1936, I think. And that was when Travis, who was always an activist, said, "Look Hank, I want you to put a paper out here." And I said, "Gee, with all my other work?" But of course I agreed. I said, "What I'll do is when I finish putting out [this issue of] the Auto Worker I'll come up to Flint and what you have to do is prepare all the material, get the guys from the shops, any contacts that you have, to write up stuff for me." And I told him how it should be written, or I could interview them if it was something important that had taken place. And I remember he came down, he drove down from Flint with somebody else, I forget who it was. And without even telling me anything, he said, "Put on your coat, you're coming to Flint."

MR. KRAUS: And I went to Flint. I put out the first issue of the Flint Auto Worker. I think those issues were good because we had good, hot material. I'd get this stuff, it was real auto worker stuff. And the reporters were--how shall I say--auto writers, worker writers, worker corespondents, we would call them then. And a lot of the stuff was very good. And the effect was tremendous because something would happen in the plant and we would be able to get the paper out in a few days telling all about it,and boy, they distributed it around. This was early in November. No, it must have been late in October.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, Dorothy, while Henry was active with the paper and you were resettling in Detroit, what were your activities at this time?

KRAUS: There were very few activities that I participated in as long as he was just doing the newspaper. I would go up to the office every once in a while and do a little typing to help out, but that wasn't interesting enough so I just didn't follow through on that. But, then all of a sudden [it seemed] something was going to happen and something did happen. Henry was very much involved and very excited, and he said to me one evening, "I think that we're going to have our first sit-down strike in Detroit, at Midland Steel. And if you don't hear from me, don't worry I may just have to stay there and sit in and I won't have any way of calling you." Naturally I accepted it. But then I kept thinking, "Well, what in the world am I going to do when he's over there? I've never seen a strike." I had never actually witnessed a strike! And besides it sounded so terribly important. I did find out there were women in the shop. Henry had told me he didn't know how many, but there were no women in the union at that time. So when Henry went off the following morning, I found out how to get there--because we were just new in Detroit, I didn't even know how to get around--and I went out to the plant. And I found that the people were already sitting in and they were passing baskets on long ropes down to the people who were outside, who put in cigarettes and some money. Then I saw this line of workers looking out from the plant. And I found the union headquarters and I came into the union headquarters, and there was John Anderson, there was Henry and a few other very active people, and they didn't notice me, and I wasn't going to make myself apparent to them, you know. So I kept up. And then I saw a couple of women standing outside, and I went over to them and pretended that I was also one of the women. Now I didn't know whether they were wives who came there. But I did start a conversation and we became friendly, and I found out that several of them were . . .

MR. KRAUS: There were more than a couple.

KRAUS: How many were there about?

MR. KRAUS: I don't know, there were certainly ten or fifteen.

KRAUS: Fifteen, ten or fifteen. A number of them, a few of them--I don't remember how many--were wives who came to see what the husbands were doing and what was happening to their husbands. But the rest of them were women who worked in the plant but were kicked out as soon as the strike started; they weren't going to have women sit in on the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

KRAUS: Well, that became a very ticklish question, you know, to have women sit in with the men and the men were staying overnight. It just wasn't going to be in good taste. [meant ironically]

MR. KRAUS: It was a problem they had to solve.

KRAUS: Yes, so the best thing to do was to ask the women to leave. So these women were outside.

INTERVIEWER: Were they angry about this?

KRAUS: No, they weren't angry. They were actually bewildered. They didn't know what in the world was going to take place, they were concerned whether they were going to be able to start working soon again. Everybody was a little bit bewildered.

MR. KRAUS: They didn't know what it was all about. They were not members of the union. There were all kind of circumstances about that which we could go into, but maybe not at this time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, just shortly, were they not members of the union because they had no interest, or because the union didn't try?

KRAUS AND KRAUS: They didn't try.

MR. KRAUS: The union didn't try because there were a couple of guys there that were very anti-feminist.

KRAUS: Chauvinistic. I started talking with these girls, young girls, who had worked in the factory, and [to] these women. I said, "Look, we should be able to do something to help them. I'm sure the union will need some help. Why don't we go in?" And they said, "Do you think we should?"

MR. KRAUS: No, it wasn't they that should go in. See it was the day shift that started the strike, and the night shift was coming on, and we had announced that everybody from the night shift

KRAUS: [should] go to a certain place because there will be a meeting there that will explain the whole thing.

KRAUS: That was the union headquarters.

MR. KRAUS: Maybe so, but anyway I recall that it was some kind of a Slovenian Hall.

KRAUS: A Slovenian Hall, yes.

MR. KRAUS: So Dorothy said, "So come on, let's go there and see what it's all about."

KRAUS: I didn't even know about the meeting, to tell you the truth. But I said, "Let's go there and hear and see what they have to say." And so they followed me. We all went together and we sat in the back--the very last row--because we were really very timid. We didn't know how we would be received. So we sat there and we heard what was taking place. And suddenly Henry noticed me and he came up to me and he says, "What are you doing here?"

MR. KRAUS: No, I wasn't angry with you.

KRAUS: He wasn't angry, but he was surprised . I said to him, "Shh. Don't give me away." And shortly after that Henry introduced us to the meeting.

MR. KRAUS: No, as a matter of fact I told John Anderson to raise the point about the women.

KRAUS: That's right.

MR. KRAUS: And that the women could set up a committee, or be members of a committee. And really, he greeted them very warmly.

KRAUS: And that made a very good impression, and he said a few words that whatever we could do to help would be important. So we immediately got together and said, "Well look, the easiest thing that we can do is to make sandwiches and send the sandwiches up to the men." And that's what we did. We found a little spot on the side of the hall--there was no kitchen or anything like that--and we sent somebody out to get some bologna and bread and whatever else they bought, and we started making sandwiches. And we never left that place. That place became the kitchen, and it became the center of activities of the women and it was from then on that we encouraged not only the women, but the men also to invite [their wives] to come and join us.

INTERVIEWER: Had you Dorothy, at this time when you first, before the strike and Henry was going to union meetings, had you gone to any union meetings with him in Detroit?

KRAUS: There were no union meetings in Detroit. [But Mortimer and some workers who had joined the union met at our apartment several times.] There was no membership, everybody was scared.

MR. KRAUS: It wasn't the way it would be now at all. Besides there were very few locals, and the meetings that--organizational meetings were something, you wouldn't have wives present.

INTERVIEWER: Before the Midland strike started, did anyone consider in any way the possibilities that the women could be useful?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, and how, and how.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ?

KRAUS: You considered it?

MR. KRAUS: No, I wasn't involved there, but I'm saying there was a big fight as to whether the women should be approached. And the stool pigeon--I'm not going to go into that, it's a very nice story, but it's a long one--but a stool pigeon who was very influential in that local was able to scotch it. And as a matter of fact, he had access to most of the women that could be organized, you know--they were working in the special department there--so that they just weren't organized, they weren't drawn into the union.

INTERVIEWER: Did he nix that for political reasons?

KRAUS: No.

MR. KRAUS: Because he was a stool pigeon!

INTERVIEWER: So then he did think that the women could be a potent force.

MR. KRAUS: Undoubtedly, undoubtedly.

INTERVIEWER: It's interesting then that it took a stool pigeon to recognize the potential force of women.

KRAUS: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: How long did the strike last?

MR. KRAUS: I think ten days.

INTERVIEWER: And was it successful?

KRAUS: Very successful.

MR. KRAUS: It was the first big successful strike ever won.

KRAUS: Sit-down [strike].

MR. KRAUS: Ever won in Detroit in the auto [industry], the first.

KRAUS: But it was a sit-down strike.

MR. KRAUS: I know, but it was the first strike of any kind.

KRAUS: Oh, of any kind. I see.

INTERVIEWER: And after this time did women continue to at least be helpful?

KRAUS: They became union members; there were a number of them that became leaders. They were absolutely wonderful. One of them was elected to the bargaining committee, and they really. . .

MR. KRAUS: It was organized as a real strike thereafter, and there were all kinds of committees. There was what they used to call the "chiseling committee." You know, you'd go out and ask storekeepers to give you things, meat or something, bread, or some potatoes.

KRAUS: Everything. Because remember there was no strike fund. There was no such thing as a strike fund [at] the union. It didn't exist.

MR. KRAUS: The union was so damn poor that it had to get all the help it could.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of committees did you generally find the women on?

MR. KRAUS: That was one--chiseling--because they'd go to the storekeepers and so on, and there was a lot of stuff that was brought. Hence the union was rich in supplies, in food. The strike was popular, the people understood it in that neighborhood. And of course there was the . . .

KRAUS: Well, there was always the kitchen committee, and the cleaning up committee, and the publicity committee.

MR. KRAUS: Leaflets.

KRAUS: And also watching in front in case some cops came or something like that. They were really like sentinels, you know? [And] they were always on the picket line.

INTERVIEWER: Did they ever get involved in any battles with the police?

KRAUS: Not there.

MR. KRAUS: There were no battles.

KRAUS: There were no battles.

MR. KRAUS: It was just a victory, you know.

KRAUS: Pure victory.

MR. KRAUS: Also, another thing that they did was, they visited wives. You started that.

KRAUS: [Wives] of the strikers.

INTERVIEWER: Do you want to talk a little about that?

KRAUS: [We] visited wives of strikers and the families to see how they were getting along and also to talk with them so that they weren't so opposed to the union and the strike, because theirs was a very, very terrific situation.

INTERVIEWER: What gave you the idea to start this?

MR. KRAUS: It really came from us--I mean the leadership, John Anderson, et cetera--because of the fact that this was a first sit-down, and we were feeling our ways. Later on in Flint, by a sort of rotation, we allowed workers to go out and rejoin their families for a day or two. They would help their wives clean up, have a good meal and see the children and such. And also it worked for encouragement. But at this point [the Midland strike] we thought that once they were in the plant they had to stay there, and that meant that for ten days they really had to stay in the plant, and this made it very tough. But as I say, that was because we were inexperienced, but with each successive sit-down our ideas of how they should be conducted evolved.

KRAUS: See, you asked who first thought of the idea of those visiting committees. It's so hard to say, these things come momentarily. You get an idea, and one leads to the other. Now I'm sure that we heard that maybe John's family, or maybe John's wife, was very dissatisfied. Word came, maybe that she was crying, or that she was in need. She was probably all alone. So immediately the idea came that we send out a couple of women to visit her. And later on, of course, we had to help families because families were really too poor to last that long in Flint without help. [They needed food, help with the rent, et cetera.]

INTERVIEWER: How strong was the union when the strike started?

MR. KRAUS: Once it was in the movement that's all we needed, because we knew they were scared of joining the union. And they would see others lose their jobs and get beaten up and so on. So they weren't going to do anything [officially join the union]. But nevertheless the fact that they were pro-union is what counted, and they would be on the right side when the sit-down occurred.

INTERVIEWER: So then the [Midland] strike was won. I forgot to ask when it occurred, how long before the Flint strike?

MR. KRAUS: The end of October, I'd say, and then came the Kelsey strike. [The midland strike was where Max Gazan came in to cook. On the second day of the Midland Steel strike the union phoned the AF of L Cooks Union and Max offered his services as a cook. He and another cook, who alternated with him, prepared meals for the sit-downers. Then, at the Kelsey-Hayes strike that followed once more Max Gazan did the cooking, as he did throughout the Flint sit-down, with Dorothy again serving as kitchen organizer and supervisor.]

INTERVIEWER: When was Kelsey?

MR. KRAUS: Kelsey strike was in November, a couple of weeks after Midland.

INTERVIEWER: And was that in Detroit as well?

KRAUS: Yes. Detroit, sure.

MR. KRAUS: Detroit, that was the West Side Local.

KRAUS: The Reuther local.

MR. KRAUS: The Reuther local, this was another very fruitful . . .

KRAUS: I went there, I was active there, too.

MR. KRAUS: Organizing the women.

KRAUS: Doing the same thing, because the women were not in the union, you see.

INTERVIEWER: But this time had there been any attempt?

MR. KRAUS: No, wait a second, Dorothy that's not so.There weren't very many women workers, [but there were some and they became very active in the sit-down, remaining in the plant]. Walter also asked you to come in and organize the . . .

KRAUS: That's right. Walter asked me to come to organize the kitchen and that's what I did.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, when Walter [Reuther] asked you to organize the kitchen at Kelsey, was he also asking you to organize the women?

KRAUS: It was taken for granted that around the kitchen you were going to get the help of the women. Although he didn't say "organize the women " actually that's what he meant. The only thing was that they couldn't think of the women as being organized in any other way at first, until they learned through the activities that the women performed in Flint, that they can be very useful in other ways besides just organizing the kitchen. However, it's true that the first thing that had to be done was to supply the strikers with food, otherwise they couldn't remain in the plant. And the ones who could organize that best and perform that task best were the women; if we could get the wives--especially of the strikers--to come in and help in cooking. And also, many of them--the wives-- knew the particular things that the men didn't like to eat, which was very important to us. And that is one of the things we failed at at first in Flint. When we served what the men called "the innards " we realized that they didn't like it. But we never asked the wives, "Now what is it that your men don't like to eat?" But that came in very handy. So therefore when Walter asked that we organize the kitchen, primarily he had in mind the fact that we must have food for the men; secondly, that if we could get thewives around the interest of feeding their men, they would be much more attuned and congenial towards the union.

MR. KRAUS: Might I add something about this? It just occurs to me, it has nothing to do with the kitchen, but you asked about women, why women were kept out of the plants in sit-downs. In the case of Kelsey, as I remember it now the women workers were allowed to stay inside the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MR. KRAUS: Yes.

KRAUS: Some of them.

MR. KRAUS: I think they were kept in a separate section of the plant but nevertheless they were allowed to participate as sit-downers.

INTERVIEWER: Why was that decision made?

MR. KRAUS: The women workers wanted to participate [in the sit-down] as we pointed out to you in the case of Flint, where we didn't allow that to take place. Pat Wiseman was very angry.

INTERVIEWER: It seems then like you took a step backwards, in Flint.

MR. KRAUS: A step backward there, yes. It was in the cut and sew department and I don't think that we had a very strong organization there.

KRAUS: The women had not been organized.

INTERVIEWER: Where are you speaking about?

KRAUS: In Flint. There was a minority of women who worked in the plant. And I would like to add that Kelsey-Hayes was a troubling situation because of the fact that the women sat in. The wives were discontent. They didn't like the idea of women being in the plant at the same time, even though we assured them that they were apart, they weren't with the men. But nevertheless they had contact, they had meetings, and so we heard rumors about the wives, that they were not satisfied. And because of that we weren't going to take any chances of having any discontent [at Flint] and so the best thing we could do, since everything was done in such a hurry and we didn't have time to discuss it with the women--the wives as well as the strikers--we thought in Flint the best thing to do was to just ask the women to please leave the plant.

INTERVIEWER: Was this also because in Flint you expected the strike to be longer?

MR. KRAUS: No, we had no idea how long it would last. As I said, or hinted--we certainly had said it often enough--there was a concentration of members. We knew we couldn't [just wait to] organize the whole plant and then have a sit-down. We would not need a sit-down under those conditions.

INTERVIEWER: Were the women at Kelsey better organized though, eventually?

MR. KRAUS: There were more in the union, perhaps at Kelsey.

KRAUS: There were a few more, shall we say, than there were in Flint.

MR. KRAUS: I don't know how many. You should talk to somebody who's left there from. . . . George Edwards would know maybe, or Victor Reuther.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know why, though, there were more women in Kelsey?

MR. KRAUS: What, in the union?

KRAUS: No, we don't know.

MR. KRAUS: It probably depends on some local situation. Maybe they were working closer to the men. The women at Fisher were in the cut and sew department making cushions.

INTERVIEWER: In Flint?

MR. KRAUS: In Flint. And that was a separate department in which they concentrated women. By the way, let me mention to you that if you really want to go after the women, in these organization days, you should talk to Stanley Nowak. Have you done so?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. KRAUS: Okay.

KRAUS: There were some wonderful women in there (electrical interference). Irene Young, a marvelous, wonderful woman, and her husband.

MR. KRAUS: Okay, then we went to Flint. And of course this was the key place. Now we had enough experience to realize how the thing might explode there. Now in the case of Flint, the question has been recently raised as to whether it was all planned, exactly, exactly, exactly. We really never knew exactly when it was going to happen, or exactly where it was going to happen. But in any case, we did know that the plant that we had to organize was Fisher One, that anything that happened would have to be at Fisher One. Fisher Two was really unimportant--it was just a small body plant for the area. AC Spark Plug was more important but we didn't have much strength there. Buick also was too weak. As for Chevy, we would have loved to have struck it, but it was too damn big, and also, of course, we were very weak in it, at that time.

KRAUS: Most members came from. . .

MR. KRAUS: So we decided it would have to be Fisher One which produced bodies for Buick, Chevrolet, and a couple of other of the most important cars. And then there was Fisher Body of Cleveland, which also was a very key plant. So between the two of them, since we felt that we had good leadership in both cases and we had certain amount. . .

KRAUS: A certain number of members. . .

MR. KRAUS: . . .that we could pull a strike in these two places. And if we were able to do this, we would be able to shut down enough

MR. KRAUS: of General Motors to show them that our strength was great and that we could actually win the strike. But the thing is that, besides that, we had in Fisher One a group--now they've been identified as communists--Bud Simons, and a couple of others [Walt Moore and Joe Devitt] and there were also Proletarian Party guys. And they were all marvelous. They had had experience before; they had been fired for union activities, they had suffered terribly in the Depression, and they were in Fisher One. They were there. If you talk about [whether the strike was] spontaneous, when the thing finally developed, it may not have been entirely planned as it did take place, that one little early sit-down, or the final big one, I mean. But nevertheless these men were there, and they could and did take [the lead].

KRAUS: They were spark plugs, absolutely spark plugs.

MR. KRAUS: And the same thing was true of Fisher in Cleveland. There were some very good men there. We knew we had to coordinate the two plants, that when the time came that one struck, the other one would have to strike soon after. Meanwhile, Homer Martin was running around the country trying to get people to strike in other plants--unimportant plants--like Atlanta and Kansas City, which of course would have scotched the whole plan. [Actually, there were strikes in these two plants, called too early, and which gave us much trouble.]

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask a question since you mentioned some folks on the left at that time. Were people aware of there being different sects, did they kind of coalesce?

MR. KRAUS: We didn't allow. . .

KRAUS: Them [the differences] to come out.

MR. KRAUS: Anybody to talk about one group or another, we just didn't encourage it. Let's put it that way.

INTERVIEWER: And they were willing to comply with that?

MR. KRAUS: Of course.

KRAUS: Sure.

MR. KRAUS: I think that they were all very cooperative. They were very happy that this kind of a feeling was established.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, there were many different political factions present in the strike, is that true?

KRAUS: I suppose that's true, although I wasn't aware of it. Absolutely not at all. and neither were the other women aware of it. Maybe one or two knew about it, but frankly nothing ever came out of that.

MR. KRAUS: I think Genora Johnson. . .

KRAUS: Maybe Genora did, but I never knew what her thinking was. The point was that everybody just worked in such a cooperative manner it was as if their lives were at stake. They had to do it, they wanted to do it, and it meant victory in the end, otherwise they would be lost. And they came through all the time; there was no question. When there was even a suggestion of having a picket line most of them came out. You didn't even have to send them word. Somehow or other it came through by word of mouth from one to the other.

MR. KRAUS: They would call each other.

KRAUS: We didn't even have time, and many of the workers didn't have telephones, remember that. There was no such thing as having mass telephonings.

MR. KRAUS: They had a car, but they didn't have a telephone.

KRAUS: They had a car, so sometimes we sent messages like to the various homes. But they always came.

MR. KRAUS: We had a committee of messengers.

KRAUS: They always came and they always worked no matter what you asked them to do. You never heard, "No, I don't like to do that," or, "I don't want to do that." I never came across that, even once, and that's quite a bit to consider that such marvelous cooperation existed.

MR. KRAUS: Especially when you consider the future, the way the union developed, which pained us so. When you know people will do something only if they are paid for it. This is a terrible situation.

INTERVIEWER: And you think this cooperation came from a sense of commitment?

KRAUS: Right, yes.

MR. KRAUS: (interruption) But in Flint when I started the paper-- The Flint Auto Worker--I heard that there was a man named Glen Shattuck, a CPO worker--the Communist Party Opposition, followers of Jay Lovestone-who was a very bright, young guy.

MR. KRAUS: Anyway, I knew he was a political, and I said, "Let's ask him if he'll help put out the paper," that is, write stories. Well, he wrote several of the best stories which I put into the paper, even though we may not have seen eye to eye, and this was the case all the way down the line. Later on when we finally pulled the Chevy strike, two of the leaders [at Chevy Nine] were also CPO'ers. And though we didn't tell anybody else in that plant, we told them what the plan was because we felt we could trust a political person, we could trust that he wouldn't be a stool pigeon. Maybe we were wrong in some cases, but as luck had it we were right in most cases.

INTERVIEWER: What were your first impressions when you first moved to Flint?

KRAUS: To begin with before we moved, before I finally came to stay, I used to go to Flint sometimes when Henry would go or with Bob Travis when he'd come to Detroit, I'd drive back with him. So I got a little bit of an impression of this horrible town, really ugly, absolutely incredibly uninteresting. There wasn't anything in that town, though the countryside was beautiful because you have green trees. Some of the people lived in little houses outside the city, most of them--very isolated.

MR. KRAUS: They were really rickety sometimes. You'd walk through and the house would shake.

KRAUS: And most of them had little gardens--vegetable gardens, which supplied them with a lot of their food, which is already an indication of how poor they were. Nowadays we see all kinds of beautiful modern factories, no matter how big they are, and we are not surprised. But [there were] in Flint at the time these huge,ugly, horrible factories, just grinding out and grinding out , the noises and the smells and everything else. Gosh, I never felt that I would ever want to live in a city like that, it was just pitiful.

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet any women at first when you were coming up with Henry and Bob Travis?

KRAUS: No, I didn't meet any.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do when you came up--did you go to these house meetings and stuff, or....?

KRAUS: No, I didn't go to any of the house meetings.

MR. KRAUS: Well, I would visit the plants. Sometimes I would stay the night in Flint and then go back.

INTERVIEWER: Before the strike?

MR. KRAUS: Before the strike.

INTERVIEWER: When you were working on the paper, were you conscious that the strike was going to break?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, I knew about it because I was up there then.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, in visiting the homes generally, you've talked about them being in rather poor condition, but were there any things that you normally found in all the homes?

KRAUS: In visiting these homes, anyway, a few of them or a number of them, two things were impressed upon me which I found there. One, every home had a garden and every home had a Bible. And outside of the Bible there were very few other books.

MR. KRAUS: Rarely saw a book. Of course, we should make the point about the gun. Hunting was the favorite sport in that part of the country, and everybody would manage to go up [North] when hunting started and get their deer, or shoot other animals. So that was really the basis of their owning these guns.

INTERVIEWER: But you also mentioned, Dorothy, that some woman said to you that she was scared, and that's why she kept a gun?

KRAUS: Actually, two of them that I had spoken to. I asked one of them, "Why do you have a gun so visible?" You know, it was right there in the bedroom. And she said, "Well, every once in while we're threatened, and I'm scared of the Black Legion."

MR. KRAUS: Yes, that's a good point. Leave it on[recorder] because I want to say that the fact that you use a gun for hunting, that doesn't mean to say that you don't have the capacity to use it for other things. And as I think I pointed out, or maybe I didn't in the book, when we were in danger that time, when all the leadership, that is, Bob, Vic, Roy, myself of being put into jail after the Fisher Two Battle, we heard that the Union War Vets had decided to get their guns and march on the prison and have us freed.

INTERVIEWER: Henry, how is it that you were in Flint when the strike broke?

MR. KRAUS: The first thing that happened was that Bob phoned and said "Henry, you'd better come up. Things are getting hot." So I happened to be in Flint when the strike started.

KRAUS: Before I came.

MR. KRAUS: Undoubtedly I was putting out a paper. And we were there in the office. Mort and I were in the office when a phone call came through from Cleveland. This was December 28, I suppose, because that's when the Cleveland strike began. And Mort went over and said, "Clevelands's on the wire." (electrical interference) Bob Travis, of course, came from Toledo Chevy and they had conducted a strike there at the beginning of May of 1935. And they were forced to accept an agreement by the AF of L--Frank Dillon--who threatened to expel them if they refused. But nevertheless it was a victory; it was the first big General Motors victory in the industry. And it could have been enormously important, even though that was the only General Motors plant in Toledo, and it wasn't a key place such as Flint or Pontiac. [But it did show that General Motors could be beaten provided there was good leadership and there was excellent rank and file leadership in that strike— Jim Roland, Bob Travis, Joe Ditzel--until it was broken by the AFL .] The strike left a powerful imprint on Bob Travis's mentality and his approach. For example, at Flint, when he heard that they were moving important dies out of Fisher One he thought, "Ah, this is a repetition of what took place in Toledo but this time we're going to do something about it!" In the months that succeeded the Toledo Chevy strike, the company did move dies out to the point where they laid off about three quarters of the workers there. I had forgotten about this but I wrote an article for the Nation magazine in--I think it's titled something like "GM" or "General Motors Strikes Back"--and I tell about how these jobs were lost. I didn't sign my own name. I signed it H.S. Grant.

INTERVIEWER: Now, were there any women in the plants?

MR. KRAUS: Yes, in the case of Fisher One, as I told you, we asked the women to leave. Later on, in strikes that took place later on in Detroit and other places, when they had women, they would separate them off, the way they did in Kelsey-Hayes.

KRAUS: Yes. (pause) The wives were suspicious.

MR. KRAUS: So, we didn't let the women stay in at Fisher One, and I remember there was a marvelous woman, I think I mentioned her in the book.

KRAUS: Yes, you did.

MR. KRAUS: By the name of Pat Wiseman. And boy, she was angry, and she said, "I work as hard as any man, and I don't get nearly the

MR. KRAUS: pay he does. And you're going to kick me out of this building! Why can't I stay in there with them and strike?" She became an organizer, after the strike.

KRAUS: She didn't want anything to do with the kitchen. She said, "No, that's not for me. I was working there and that's where I should have been." And she never helped in the kitchen.

INTERVIEWER Dorothy, Henry found or felt at the time that the men were rather progressive or liberal, in their regards towards women, and women's role.

MR. KRAUS: Not the men, the leadership.

INTERVIEWER: No, the leadership, we're talking about. Was your experience with the male leadership the same?

KRAUS: Absolutely not. They were--well, I hate to use the word "chauvinistic" but they felt women had their role, and their place, in their place. And outside of that, well.... Shall we say they were very nice, and they tolerated women. But I would not use the expression that Henry used that they were so advanced. It's true that compared perhaps to the AF of L leadership, since these were all younger men, and also more progressive thinking, I would say that they, from that point of view, were more advanced. But to think or to say that their attitude towards women was very different, I would say no.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, I also want to amend something that I said about Midland Steel, the fact that there were no women in the local. Now the leader of the local was John Anderson who was supposed to be a political. He had run for governor on the communist ticket once. And he certainly was a left-winger. And I know that he was opposed to the idea of not organizing the women. But it seems strange to me that stronger efforts hadn't been made to do something about it, since he was in there. Why he had to accept the really nefarious influence of a guy like Jim Howe, a stool pigeon. Because women weren't organized, he certainly could have said, "To hell with that. You're not going to run this situation according to your liking. Our principle is to bring women into the union, and we should."

INTERVIEWER: You're referring here to the discussion of whether or not to let women be in the Midland strike, and then the stool pigeons in the plant.

MR. KRAUS: But the fact is the women weren't in the union there.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. KRAUS: And it was he--he had the largest influence of keeping them out.

INTERVIEWER: The stool pigeon? Okay. Now back a second, Dorothy, to Flint again, and you said the men felt that the women had their place? What was that, what areas?

KRAUS: Well, the place was to help in the kitchen to feed the men, and to take care of their families, of course, and little by little they realized the help that the women could give outside--not only in the kitchen but outside the kitchen--on the picket line, and work in the office.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay. You also referred to, gave an example of whether or not the men were progressive or not by some of the comments. You were judging that by the comments that they used to make about women, do you remember? Okay, you were sort of describing some of the kind of subtle sexism that you felt?

KRAUS That always existed. As soon as you were with men, you were treated differently, and you had a feeling that the way they looked at you and the way they acted, they would much rather you were away, you weren't there. There was a definite feeling on the part of the men--"You're a nice girl and you do your job," and that's about all. There was no feeling of equality, I must admit that. But you accepted it because you knew that you couldn't make an issue of it. You couldn't say, "Look, that isn't the way you should treat a woman," or "that isn't the way you should even act or look at her." But you had to accept those things. They weren't unpleasant to that extent, I must say. But I felt it, I knew that that existed but accepted it because it was a crucial moment. You had to win the strike, you had to continue working, and no matter what anybody else thought or said, you continued.

INTERVIEWER: So in other words, for the sake of the greater picture--the strike at that time--you put aside some of that.

KRAUS: That's right, exactly.

MR. KRAUS: I'd like to add a point if I may--is there room on the tape?

INTERVIEWER: I think we have enough.

MR. KRAUS: You know, this would seem to be contradictory of the fact that women did play such a really significant and often tremendous role in the strike in Flint and other places. I think that a large part of that was a result of the women themselves developing this work. Once they had established such things as the Emergency Brigade [Flint sit-down, 1937] and in several

MR. KRAUS: of the committees of the strike, they themselves began to propose ideas. They themselves began to do things, like this tremendous thing outside of the Fisher One when the union decided that they would not evacuate the plant. I'm sure that the women were the ones that said, "Well, let's have a big thing going outside in order to symbolize the fact that the people were going to continue to support the strike."

INTERVIEWER: So, they developed a sense of autonomy.

MR. KRAUS: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

(interruption)

MR. KRAUS: It was, I'd say, a liberal, emancipated sort of male leadership even though getting rid of all male chauvinism is impossible in our present world.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find them [liberal traits] to be in the men?

KRAUS: No. Some of them made remarks to begin with about women and girls. But on the whole I would say that they accepted the women because the women did an awful good job for them. Here again, we must say that there was no strike fund. There was no money. We had to send out people, to use the expression then, to chisel from everywhere. Once we even got half a side of a cow--it was given to us. We didn't know what to do with it. Most of us had never cooked and certainly not for as many as we had to feed, not only the inside strikers, but the outside people, those that were on the picket line. And very often the families came too. We fed as many as 5,000 in the later weeks of the strike. Of course, many of the wives didn't want to have anything to do with us. They didn't want to be near us. They wouldn't trust us. They thought that we were leading their men to do something that they'd never get over, they'd never get their job back, and that was another big task that the women had to do. And the men, too--that is, especially those that used to go back and see their wives.

INTERVIEWER: Did women do most of the chiseling then?

KRAUS: The women, yes. Later on we insisted that men go with the women. We insisted first of all we wanted to involve men who weren't sitting down. Besides, I constantly felt that we were separated. Alright, we did our job, we fed them. But that wasn't enough. I wanted that we should be more

KRAUS: united with them. And then of course it was also important for the women to see the actual strikers. And so they went along with the women.

INTERVIEWER: Did it take much prodding of the males to get them to go with you?

KRAUS: Oh no, it didn't. There were quite a number of them who were very eager to help. Actually there was not very much for the men to do--those who were not sitting in. Alright, they had a meeting every single day, but what do you do after the meeting? There was a beer joint downstairs so they used to go downstairs and drink beer. And we had certain games and things like that. Remember there was no television then.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a political reason to keep the men busy?

KRAUS: No it wasn't political. It was just in order to keep the members--those who were not sitting in--occupied.

MR. KRAUS: (electrical interference) We were always looking for things for them to do. It was so easy for them to get malcontent and discouraged. One of the reasons for the picket line--not only for the women but for the men--was in order to keep them in front of the fellows and, of course to give encouragement to those who were sitting in.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think having women on the picket line helped morale?

MR. KRAUS: That was perhaps the most important point of having the picket line, because men probably didn't expect women to be there, didn't expect them to be so heroic and so courageous. I'll tell of an incident, and this is just one of the many. One of our women was Eleanor Gustafson, and it was during the big Battle of Bulls Run. She came to the picket line. She knew her boyfriend Jim Widmark, was on the line, and he came up to her and he started yelling, "What are you doing here?" And she said, "I'm helping out." He was not inside--he was from Buick. And he said, "Well, I didn't give you permission to come down here." He says, "Well, you can't be here. You didn't even ask me," or whatever it was he said. And all of a sudden she got angry. "Well, I have a right to stay here, and I'm going to!" He was stunned and he left.

KRAUS: I'll always remember, especially the wives of the sit-downers who were inside. When they looked outside of the window and they saw their wife walking and supporting them that way--can you just imagine them? They absolutely--besides being proud--why, they were secure, because many of them were afraid of what their wives would think. There were all kinds of rumors, you know, wives were often concerned.

INTERVIEWER: Was it difficult to organize women to come to the kitchen? Did you have to search them out, or did they come willingly?

KRAUS: To begin with, we worked with the women, the wives of those who were sitting in. We started with them and that was already half the battle. And then, whenever there was a meeting--and there was a meeting every single day at the Pengelly --we would announce, "Please tell your wives to come. We want them, we need their help, and they don't have to do much work, but we need them." And little by little, the wives would come. Not too many at the beginning. Then we had visiting committees to visit them and they encouraged them to come. Alright, they had children, they couldn't leave but we could organize it so that somebody could sit with their children for two hours; just come for two hours, we'd urge. And then sometimes they would need cars and we did what we could.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, were there any black women involved in the activities of the Auxiliary or the Brigade?

KRAUS: There were no black women involved during the strike. And as Henry pointed out, this was probably our shortcoming. But we were there only for the strike. We--Henry and I--didn't live in Flint before the strike, and so therefore we didn't have any contacts. And during the strike we were so exhausted, we were so tired, we had so much to do, and there never were enough people. Also, to bring up the question of trying to get black women to join us meant that we had to first get the men to join the union.

INTERVIEWER: The black men?

KRAUS: The black men to join the union, and only after that would the women come in.

MR. KRAUS: No, that wasn't the way it would have been. You see, there were blacks in the union, as I told you about, in the Buick foundry. But Buick was not involved in the strike. It would have been a little difficult [and dangerous] to bring them into the strike. We had very few Buick people altogether that operated in the strike. Sometimes they would be at the crucial points--that would be a few of the most outstanding unionists --the most progressive ones would come in and be on the picket line. But basically it was sort of a dangerous thing to do. They could have lost their jobs very easily. And certainly we weren't going to ask the black men from the foundry of Buick to take this chance of losing their job. And so if you didn't have the men there, you couldn't have asked their wives to come. So it was a rather complex situation. But we should have done something at least--it seems to me--to

MR. KRAUS: at least get to know some of the wives of the outstanding people like Henry Clark.

KRAUS: One other factor might enter here. Since as Henry mentioned, Buick was not on strike, and Mortimer had specifically said, "Now you wait until your turn comes," if we had involved some of the men, and the men or even one or two might have gotten fired, the union would have been put in a position where they would have had to fight for the reinstatement of these people. And that would have been a big added problem in a terrific strike, with the union being as weak as it was at that time.

INTERVIEWER: That is very significant. Dorothy, did you make any of the trips with Brigade members to other cities?

KRAUS: Yes, we did. We had a number of cars with women. We went to Saginaw the first time. Then another time we went to Lansing.

MR. KRAUS: To see the governor.

KRAUS: Yes, we went to Lansing to see the governor, but that was not to [directly] help in any of the strikes.

INTERVIEWER: What was the purpose of that meeting?

KRAUS: Well, we were trying to put as much pressure as possible upon the governor to help with the negotiations and to get in touch with Washington, and get in touch with General Motors.

MR. KRAUS: Is it possible that you went at the time after he sent the National Guard in and shut the plant down, wouldn't allow food into the. . .

KRAUS: Yes. We had a committee, we had one car that went then, too. But previous to that we also went in several cars. But the one that was. . .

INTERVIEWER: Wait, let me ask a question. Did you meet with the governor at this time, or did you sort of demonstrate outside?

KRAUS: No, we demonstrated. We saw his secretary, and we left a written petition.

INTERVIEWER: Was this just women, or women and men?

KRAUS: Just women, this was just the women. And another time the women went to Pontiac, but that was after the strike. And in Pontiac we actually were going to help them--either help the women organize or else get on the picket line--if there was a need for us to participate. But we were stopped out-

KRAUS: side the city. We never got into Pontiac. The police forced us to go back.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

KRAUS: They wouldn't let us come in, that's all. They just were there and they surrounded us and they said, "Listen ladies you'd better go back if you don't want any trouble." We argued with them--we tried to persuade them. We said, "We'll only send in one or two people." The answer was no, and sure enough, we stayed there for whatever time it took, a couple of hours, and we went back.

INTERVIEWER: Did you, when you were driving in the cars, were you ever harassed?

KRAUS: No, we never had any [such] experience. This was the only experience we had when we had to go back.

MR. KRAUS: Of course, you know, in connection with Saginaw we had a very bad case where the organizers who went in there to help the Saginaw workers--this was during the strike--were attacked by goons and then put into cars and taken back to Flint. And it was all a prepared plot and they were sidetracked in this car and the intent was to kill them actually.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any women in there or just male organizers?

MR. KRAUS: No women. But after that, when we decided we were going to really send up a delegation, I think Dorothy's group of women were involved in that.

INTERVIEWER: Who organized the Auxiliary?

KRAUS: Well, I really don't know how it started, but I think Genora did, that is, the Emergency Brigade.

INTERVIEWER: The other--well, no.

KRAUS: The Auxiliary? When we started getting women to help in the kitchen we already started talking about it being necessary for the women, when the strike was finished, to have an auxiliary. So we already started talking about it. But we didn't have the energy nor the time, nor the possibility of actually organizing an auxiliary at that time.

MR. KRAUS: It was much more to the point at this time, this idea of an emergency brigade--far more to the point.

KRAUS: And I'm sure it was Genora [who started the Emergency Brigade]. An auxiliary is something that you work with later on--it's a general organization. The Emergency Brigade was there to help at a moment's notice. If it's necessary to picket every single hour on the hour, we were there. If it's necessary to break the windows we were there. I'm sure they [the leadership] were very surprised and very proud of the women.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, the leadership was pleased by the whole thing, and we realized the importance of this role, its tremendous importance. Not only as a militant group who were there, which was aiding the strike in times of need, but also from the morale standpoint.

KRAUS: It was very important from a morale standpoint.

MR. KRAUS: And once they began, they had all kinds of ideas.

INTERVIEWER: Did the women decide on their own activities?

MR. KRAUS: Yes.

KRAUS: Oh, yes.

MR. KRAUS: Mainly, I'd say mainly. Of course we'd call on them, too.

KRAUS: Always in conjunction with the needs, you see, with what was necessary.

MR. KRAUS: Like during the Chevy thing, we had to have this terrific decoy in Chevy Nine. Well, we told the Brigade the role that they were going to play. I didn't do it--probably Bob did. I don't know who he talked to, maybe to Genora, maybe to somebody else. But nevertheless he said the Brigade should be there and really raising cain.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any women who knew about the whole plan to strike Chevy Four?

KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did Genora Johnson?

KRAUS: She knew from Kermit. [Genora's husband, Kermit Johnson.] Whatever Kermit knew, he told her. And of course she knew the plan of Chevy Four. As for myself, there were three of us who were scouts, and my station was at Chevy Nine. I had a whole pocketful of nickels. Every few minutes I'd go into the nearby drug store and phone the Pengelly Building, phoning Bob as to what was happening on the outside.

MR. KRAUS: We had two phones--Bob was at one and I was at the other. And we were coordinating. You know, how they do it in the army. Somebody would call us and we would say. "Well, do this," and so on.

KRAUS: And I would go outside, watch if anything was happening.

MR. KRAUS: She, and Gene Richards was another. [Gene Richards worked at Buick.]

KRAUS: One other.

MR. KRAUS: Ralph Dale was the third. [He was from Milwaukee.]

KRAUS: So I was phoning but I didn't have the slightest idea of what was happening. And I was afraid of asking questions.

INTERVIEWER: Were you afraid?

KRAUS: I don't think so. First of all, we had so much confidence in what we were doing, and the fact that there were all these friends. If I had been alone, or if there had been only two or three of us, I probably would have been scared. But the fact that there were so many of us together, I don't ever remember being scared.

INTERVIEWER: [Was Chevy Four the only plant where violence took place?]

MR. KRAUS: There was violence in Fisher Two. You see, that was not in our plan at all. Fisher Two was not an important plant. And yet, of course, when we were able to win our victory there at Bull's Run, it had a tremendous moral effect. We won our victory, largely because they gave it away by closing the gates. In other words, we were able to prepare ourselves, to send people there.

INTERVIEWER: Let's turn to the management at GM at this point. As the strike's progressing and they're realizing this isn't going to be an easy win for them, I imagine that all the workers of the world's eyes were on the workers of Flint, that other industrialists were very concerned with what was going on at GM. And the stakes were sort of rising. Are you aware of any joint efforts on the part of the industrialists or a joint strategy or anything like that?

MR. KRAUS: No, we weren't aware of that at that time. But we did know this from what was taking place, that there was sort of an escalation of action on the part of the company. For instance, in the case of Cadillac, they attacked the strikers there.

MR. KRAUS: Also, in Chevy itself--I forget when but some time earlier--they attacked the union sound car at a meeting outside, and a couple of company guards came out and smashed the loud-speaker. Then we began to realize that the "sound car" was like a symbol to them. They were scared of it; it had such power. Who had ever used a sound car in a labor struggle? So that gave us a certain feeling of confidence because we happened to have such damn good people who could talk on the sound car. Both Victor [Reuther] and Roy were marvelous talkers, and I spoke there occasionally.

KRAUS: Tell them about the Chevy Two sound truck.

MR. KRAUS: You mean Fisher Two. That's what I'm talking about. Vic was there and he said, "Do this, do that," just like a general. And I came in not long after. I was sitting with him, and they were shooting these whatchamacallits down by this time. They had already been driven up the hill, halfway up the hill by the strikers. And I just walked by them. They didn't do a thing to me. And I came in and I sat next to Vic. And these things would shoot by, and they were aiming at this truck. I think Genora spoke at that time, don't you?

KRAUS: Maybe she did. I don't remember. Did she say something [through the loudspeakers]?

MR. KRAUS: I know she did on other occasions.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, since you were on the strike kitchen, did you go into the plants at all to take food in? Did you ever do that?

KRAUS: I went in once, because there was a complaint against the food. We had prepared a meal of the cows inner organs. And they absolutely sent out a notice to us:"Don't you ever feed us anything like the innards." And we didn't know what in the world to do. Of course those were inexpensive items and so we thought we would make use of them. So I went in that one time. That was the only time except after the strike. When the celebration took place I went in just to see what things were like.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember anything?

KRAUS: From the strike?

INTERVIEWER: From the times you went into the plant.

KRAUS: Oh yes. I saw the way they were sleeping--they'd fix up the

KRAUS: seats, the car seats, and they had blankets. But I didn't stay very long. Well, the strike committee talked to me very seriously and they said, "We're not going to accept this kind of food."

MR. KRAUS: We want to know what the menu is beforehand, every day. [We suddenly became scared that maybe a stool pigeon had gotten into the food delivery committee and might try to put something into the containers that could cause illness.]

KRAUS: Yes.

MR. KRAUS: And they would ask them--the newspaper guys--asked them, "Well, are you going to go out?" (electrical interference)

KRAUS: So we became very careful and often we had one of the women go with them, as far as the plant, and then just let them take the food in.

(pause)

INTERVIEWER: Given your theatrical background, [Dorothy] did you make any attempts to organize any theater at this time or did anyone?

KRAUS: No, we didn't do anything of the kind since we didn't have the time. But Mary Heaton Vorse came into town--she and Josephine Herbst--and ever so many people by that time were in town. They occupied every single room in all the hotels, and of course we welcomed them. And Mary said, "Now listen, we have to do something. We have to give them some entertainment, maybe we should do a theatrical performance." And we would meet in the hotel with her and a few other people and a skit was written about what was taking place. It was one of those "living theater" types of skits. But Mary had the idea that we should do it in Greek Chorus fashion, which meant that we ought to be dressed in long white robes for it.

MR. KRAUS: Togas.

KRAUS: Like a toga type.

MR. KRAUS: Listen, I don't know if you mentioned the fact that Mary came at the time of Isadora Duncan with the Greek dance.

KRAUS: Yes, she was very much impressed by Isadora Duncan. So we went around "borrowing" all the sheets from the beds in the hotel, and we had several rehearsals. And I was very unhappy

KRAUS: about it. Because I thought to myself, here we'd appear before the workers at Pengelly all draped in these white sheets talking in a chorus. Well, it was just a little bit out of keeping with everything that was going on at the time! However, fortunately the strike ended just at that time, and so we disrobed our sheets, and we performed at the Pengelly at a huge meeting, before I don't know how many thousands of workers--all those that could get in--and we did this skit for them. Now how it went over I can't tell you, but they applauded. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: What was the skit about?

KRAUS: It was about the sit-down.

MR. KRAUS: "The Strike Marches On" or something like that.

KRAUS: It was called "The Strike Marches On", and it was actually some scenes including the women and the Emergency Brigade and including a few of the sit-ins.

MR. KRAUS: And the sheriff, I remember.

KRAUS: And the sheriff was dressed up with a pot belly.

MR. KRAUS: Big, fat pot belly.

INTERVIEWER: And who participated basically as actors?

KRAUS: A few of the women participated, and I think one or two of the fellows--the younger fellows--we got them involved to be sit-downers, and Mary was in the wing. If anybody lost a word or got stuck she would whisper loudly.

MR. KRAUS: It was all impromptu.

KRAUS: It was all impromptu; there was no script.

MR. KRAUS: The words had been written, but they couldn't learn them. There was no time to learn them.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. KRAUS: Yes. Dorothy was also the one that originated another idea and talked to us about it. She thought, "Why don't we have films made of the strike and the events that take place." There was somebody that had a camera. But who was going to pay for the film? So I think I took it up with Mort, and Mort took it up with George Addes, who was Secretary-Treasurer.

MR. KRAUS: And he was the one who would have had to furnish the money. Now George wasn't very much impressed by the whole thing. It was in the second half of the strike, and he said "Yeah, okay, okay." And he probably forgot. I might refer to it now and then if I was talking to him on the phone or something. And he would say, "Yes, I've got to take it up with the officers." So toward the very end of the strike after everything had already happened, he called up and he said, "Listen, I'm sending you a check for a hundred dollars for your films." We never took any films.

INTERVEIWER: That was never filmed.

MR. KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: [Was there ever any other kind of professional entertainment during the Flint Strike?]

MR. KRAUS: Yes, The Contemporary (electrical interference) Theatre of Detroit volunteered to perform inside the plant for the sit-downers.

KRAUS: They went in several times. I didn't go with them but they performed. Do you remember any of them?

MR. KRAUS: They were. . .

KRAUS: They were a wonderful group.

MR. KRAUS: They were a semi-professioanl group of people, sort of like the People's Theater in Cleveland.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, you of course I imagine, participated in the Women's Day demonstration?

KRAUS: Yes I did, like many hundreds of other women. Now what do you want, the reason for the demonstration?

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

KRAUS: The demonstration was organized in order to heighten the support for the strikers because of the change of plans. They were not going to evacuate, which Henry already told us about, and we had planned on having a Women's Day parade during or right after the evacuation of the plant. But now that that was called off and the men were going to continue

KRAUS: staying in the plant, we still organized a Women's Day which included many, many hundreds. Isn't that right?

MR. KRAUS: Yes.

KRAUS: They came all dressed up imagining that there would be an evacuation from the plant, and that they were going to. . .

MR. KRAUS: From Fisher One.

KRAUS: . . .greet their husbands and their friends and everything else. But instead it was announced that due to unforseen circumstances --Mortimer announced the reason for it--that we are going to just give these men our support and we're going to have a Women's Day in order to show them our support. And we marched up and down, way way down the street, and then back up the steet. The plant was about a half mile long, and we had a fiddler. He came, so we had some music and we danced for hours, absolutely for hours, even though it was cold and there was a lot of snow on the ground and the babies were there and the wives came with their children.

MR. KRAUS: I think the street was frozen and they danced on the very slippery ice.

KRAUS: It was bitter cold. And we sang songs. It was a gala affair.

INTERVIEWER: And it was a publicity piece.

KRAUS: No, it wasn't, it was a morale piece. Of course the photographers were there in force because they expected also that the plant would be evacuated.

MR. KRAUS: No, we didn't think of it in terms of publicity.

KRAUS: Publicity in the ordinary sense? No, not then.

MR. KRAUS: It was much more important for us to think of the morale of our strikers, and of our people outside of Flint. Because you didn't get publicity in Flint anyway. You couldn't break through and get anything decent in the Flint Journal, which was viciously, violently, virulently anti-union. Never told the true story, and they were controlled by General Motors. So we said, "To heck with them!" And the radio was even worse.

KRAUS: There was no television.

MR. KRAUS: And as far as national press was concerned, The New York Times and so on, all these different reporters--it didn't mean too much to us, because our people didn't read those papers anyway.

INTERVIEWER: So then you wanted to keep up the morale.

MR. KRAUS: Morale, yes.

KRAUS: And also for this occasion, I remember, many cars came in from Detroit, because people really expected that there would be an evacuation of the plant. So, many came and that also helped morale. It was a very fine day.

MR. KRAUS: I might explain too that a good many people thought, "Oh, the strike is a catastrophe." Well, we didn't look upon it as a catastrophe. This was, to us, a big and bright and glorious manifestation of solidarity and militancy and courage. And finally it would be the way of building the union and getting, for the workers and for the people, what they should have had long ago. So that when the question of getting out of the plant came up, with that agreement with General Motors which they finally broke, and agreed secretly to meet with the Flint Alliance, we considered this to be [a big mistake]. We didn't like it at all. I think the arrangement was that after the evacuation negotiations would go on, and the company would not try to reopen the plants for about ten days. [Actually, it was fifteen days.] Well, to us that wasn't enough. There was no assurance. The plant had been closed already for three weeks almost. So what would be the point? What would we gain? Another week. And as each day passed the company would say, "Well, another couple of days and then we'll be able to just smash the union and go through those picket lines, and start the plants going and get scabs back in." Meanwhile the Flint Alliance was whooping up support for reopening the plant, to get the men back to work. Everybody's suffering, we know, they need the money. And though we didn't like it, we agreed. The national CIO, the Detroit leadership--the officers all wanted it. Martin certainly wanted it. So what could we do? Finally the company had agreed to negotiate. What a great thing! They would sit down at the same table with us. And so we finally gave in. But we weren't happy. Therefore, when Mort announced to the sit-downers at Fisher One, that they were not going to evacuate the plant, "Hurrah!" The guys were just overjoyed, because they had felt--this was after all the most militant group, maybe eight hundred or a thousand workers were there--that it was wrong to evacuate.

KRAUS: Well they certainly understood the situation much better than the National Committee in Detroit!

INTERVIEWER: The leadership?

MR. KRAUS: The leadership.

KRAUS: The leadership.

MR. KRAUS: Much better. So it wasn't a question of building up their morale because their morale was damn good. But it [the big demonstration] was to show that we were in command and happy and eager to continue to fight.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. I imagine that you were both involved or knew about the taking of Chevy Four.

MR. KRAUS: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And we should maybe talk about that a little bit. Why don't I first ask Dorothy. Were you involved with the women that day who were outside of the plant gates at Chevy Nine?

KRAUS: Yes, I was involved at Chevy Nine. There are several things that I was involved in. First of all, I was one of those --there were three of us--with a pocket full of nickels and with instructions to phone every few minutes to the Pengelly Building, to Bob and to Henry or whoever else was answering the phone at that time. Giving them the information as to what was happening. And then Walter Reuther came from Detroit with a number of other people and he came in front of Chevy Nine and he noticed me. So he yelled to me to help him organize the women. Because the women were already coming in to be in front of Chevy Nine and we were scared that once they heard that things were beginning to happen inside they would be scared that something was taking place against their husbands. So we wanted them across the street from Chevy Nine, and that was a hard thing to make them understand without telling them actually what was going to happen. And sure enough when it did happen, when somebody--I think it was Ted LaDuke. . .

MR. KRAUS: No, it was Tom Klasey.

KRAUS: Klasey's wife. Whoever it was, he broke the window from the inside of Chevy Nine, and we actually saw one of the fellows

MR. KRAUS: with blood running down his face. And that's all the women had to see. From then on there was no controlling them, there was no keeping them on the other side of the street. They ran and they all came with clubs, I must admit.

MR. KRAUS: Oh yes.

KRAUS: They always carried clubs, and they came and they started breaking the windows. And the windows were rather high, and it was not easy to break those as at some of the other plants. But nevertheless the windows were broken. And they kept yelling, "They're murdering our husbands, they're murdering our husbands." And from then on it was bedlam. And Walter was so angry, he was so angry especially at me, "Can't you control them?" He'd say to me, "Get them to come back, get them to come back!" Well, actually I didn't have the time to talk to Walter and to ask him why should they come back? I didn't understand why he was so set on getting them back. But I thought he must have some sort of a reason. And so for a little while I did try to get the women to get back on the other side. But it was impossible. And the women remained there until the men came out.

MR. KRAUS: I think he was afraid of the cops, the cops outside,of their attacking the women. This was it, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Who had arranged for the women to be there that afternoon?

MR. KRAUS: This was the plan. We had a big scenario worked out because that would mean that we would attract everybody. We also wanted the company to feel that this was our big attack so that they would go through with bringing their people--all the company guards and so on--bring them into Chevy Nine, which would of course free Chevy Four for its capture. And that's what happened. I remember I told the newspaper guys, "Listen, if you want a good story go to Chevy Nine today." This was long before, it must have been two o'clock in the afternoon, and the strike didn't start until three-thirty, or three-twenty to be exact.

KRAUS: All the photographers were there, the cameramen. . .

MR. KRAUS: It's as though they all. . .

KRAUS: It was the biggest show.

MR. KRAUS: . . .knew what was going to take place, the whole story in advance. And it was very effective because it really did

MR. KRAUS: its job. Genora, I think, in one of the films speaks about holding back the police.

INTERVIEWER: At Four, that's at Chevy Four.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, she and a few others, after Chevy Nine gave up, did establish a picket line at Chevy Four. It was certainly okay to set up a line in front of Chevy Four, on Chevrolet Avenue, on the hill, but there's no point exaggerating its importance at that moment. The battle was still going on inside Chevy Four between the union forces and the supervision but the pro-union group was getting stronger all the time. Because there were no armed company guards inside, they had all been drawn off to Chevy Nine and couldn't get back! It's doubtful if the few city police would have gone into the plants and besides, they could have been swallowed up, if they did, because by now there were many hundreds of union men in possession and the non-strikers had left or were leaving. There were only two entrances to Chevy Four. One was there and one was on the inside of the plant area, way on the other side and that's where the company guards would have come. And there were a few of them that did get in, perhaps, but they were chased out.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, were you aware that simultaneously they were trying to take Chevy Four as well?

KRAUS: No. I was not in on the plan and I didn't ask any questions and nobody told me. However, though I didn't know what was was going to happen I knew that something was going to happen. Actually, when we first went before Chevy Nine and we all put on such a demonstration, I still thought that it was Chevy Nine we wanted. And it wasn't until afterwards that I realized that it was not Chevy Nine but Chevy Four that the plan was about. But I didn't know it then.

MR. KRAUS: Well we kept it secret, it had to be.

KRAUS: Completely secret.

MR. KRAUS: As a matter of fact, as you know from the book, even the few Chevrolet stewards that we had out at Fisher Body there at midnight the night before, we didn't even tell all of them. We couldn't. So we gave out a false story because it was Bob's idea that there would be stool pigeons among them, and there were. If we had told them the true story it would have wrecked the whole thing; all the plant police would have been at Chevy Four and just destroyed the strike. And so we told all the Chevy stewards that it was Chevy Nine that we

MR. KRAUS: wanted. Those who knew the truth were only Kermit, and Ed Cronk, and Howard Foster, who represented the Chevy Four night men. Kermit was leader of the Chevy Four day men. Ed Cronk was the Chevy Six leader. And that was all. We didn't even tell the Chevy Nine guys, Ted LaDuke and Tom Klasey, that it was Chevy Four. We said to them, "It's Chevy Six that we [want]. All you have to do is hold your plant for forty minutes." And those guys in Chevy Nine did a terrific job though they took an awful beating. Now let me tell you about the error that I found, that you asked about, in Sidney Fine. I just re-read it in trying to work out an answer to one of your questions the other day. He says that Cronk was leading a group of his people from Chevy Six to Chevy Nine when Roy Reuther and somebody else from their sound truck said, "No, no, no, go to Chevy Four." Well, this is impossible because.... Ed Cronk knew that he didn't have to go to Chevy Nine, he had to go to Chevy Four. That was the whole plan that he had helped to work out. He knew that he had to take as many men as possible to Chevy Four to help them take the plant and to hold it. And so it was impossible that Ed Cronk could have been going to Chevy Nine.

KRAUS: Even Walter didn't know it. I'm not saying that they kept it from him especially-- but the point is he wasn't in Flint when the plan was worked out. He had just came in that day with his people. So he was given the order, "Stay with the sound truck, and stay in front of Chevy Nine." And that's what he did.

MR. KRAUS: Well I don't think Walt ever claims that he knew.

KRAUS: Walter? He doesn't, I'm just mentioning it.

MR. KRAUS: I tell about it in the book, how he came back to the Pengelly and I was in the street when he arrived because we knew something was happening at Chevy Four and this was a crucial moment. I was going to get one of the union cars to drive me down there and that's when I heard the noise of their sound cars returning. They were making a lot of noise as though it was a big victory. There were two sound cars that came back and one was Walter's. And I stopped him, "What's it all about? What happened at Chevy Four?" He says, "It fell through." So I said, "You mean to say the whole...?" "Yea", he says, "I understand it all fell through." So I said, "Oh, for Christ sake," and they parked and we went upstairs. And Powers Hapgood was with them, the CIO leader, and we all went into Bob's office and of course Bob was feeling terrible. And Powers shook Bob's hand, and he says, "Well, it was a

MR. KRAUS: noble effort, Bob." And that's when Ralph Dale phoned and said, "Bob she's ours." He was going inside Chevy Four to help build up the defenses, he said. And of course the plan had gone through quietly and beautifully.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, how did you go from Nine to Four? I mean, you thought that things had. . .

KRAUS: We all walked.

MR. KRAUS: You go around.

INTERVIEWER: No, no, no, I mean, you thought you had lost at Nine, right?

KRAUS: I didn't know whether we had lost or whether we had won. But I don't remember who told us to go to Chevy Four.

MR. KRAUS: Did Genora tell you that she was going?

KRAUS: No, she didn't tell me. Genora never told me where she was going, but she disappeared. I know that because I looked around once and she wasn't there. Besides I saw her walk off somewhat before and I didn't know where she was going. I don't remember who it was that told us, "Now let's go to Chevy Four." But since we all went to Chevy Four someone must have made the suggestion. But I can't tell you now who it was.

MR. KRAUS: Maybe it was Roy on the other sound truck.

INTERVIEWER: And what did you find when you got to Four?

KRAUS: When we got to Four we realized--by that time Henry was there and a number of other people were there--that that was the plant that they had wanted. For the first time I realized what the whole idea was. And of course we were terribly excited by that.

INTERIVEWER: And then did you form. . .

KRAUS: We had a picket line, we stayed there and we sang, and everything.

MR. KRAUS: When I got there the gate was closed already, that is, all the people had come out and were going to leave and they closed the gate. And I had to go over the gate.

KRAUS: Yes, you did.

MR. KRAUS: I went over with Walter and several others.

KRAUS: But I want to tell you that there was no cops.

MR. KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: When you got there.

KRAUS: When we got there, there were no cops.

MR. KRAUS: There was no problem with cops.

INTERVIEWER: A little earlier Henry talked about some of the "left" men, or leaders and what-nots in the plants. There were leftist women as well who came to Flint to help, didn't they?

KRAUS: Well, no.

INTERVIEWER They were there anyway?

MR. KRAUS: The wives.

KRAUS: The wives? Let's see. Bud Simon, his wife.

MR. KRAUS: Joe Devitt's wife.

KRAUS: I don't want to mention all sorts of names.

MR. KRAUS: No, there were no outsiders.

INTERVIEWER: Were they somehow different? I mean, were you conscious of these being women who had more political sense or anything?

KRAUS: No.

MR. KRAUS: But the men were. (electrical interference) Maybe a couple of the gals that were working in the office, for the union.

KRAUS: Fania, whatever her name was.

INTERVIEWER: Fish?

KRAUS: Fish.

MR. KRAUS: She didn't work in the office.

KRAUS: I know she didn't work in the office (electrical interference) She moved to Flint.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any others like that that you remember?

KRAUS: No, I don't.

MR. KRAUS: I told you about Jim Widmark's friend.

KRAUS: [She] became his wife later on.

MR. KRAUS: Right, Eleanor Gustafson. Yes, she knew what it was all about, very militant.

KRAUS: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. You were talking earlier, Henry, about at the end of the strike, in regard to the World War One Veterans Brigade, Bob thanked them for their efforts and sent them home and that was the end of that.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, right.

INTERVIEWER: I'm curious to know what happened to the Brigade, was that also disbanded afterwards?

MR. KRAUS: The Emergency Brigade?

INTERVIEWR: Yes.

MR. KRAUS: No, I think it continued. Certainly it merged into the Women's Auxiliary. And it became broader, because it was a national organization, it was a very important organization, with organizers and so on.

KRAUS: The UAW designated a national woman organizer to organize the Auxiliaries. I don't remember her name any more.

MR. KRAUS: Stone, Eve Stone.

KRAUS: Eve Stone, that's right. Do you know of her?

INTERVIEWER: I've heard of her, yes.

MR. KRAUS: She was a Lovestonite, I believe.

KRAUS: She came in and she was supposed to organized the Women's Auxiliary all over the country. And so the Emergency Brigade joined, or anyway they were included.

MR. KRAUS: It no longer had a function because it was an <u>Emergency</u> Brigade.

KRAUS: So that was that.

INTERVIEWER How long did the Auxiliaries go?

KRAUS: Well the Auxiliaries lasted through quite a bit.

MR. KRAUS: Do they still exist?

KRAUS: No. The only sad part was that they didn't have a real function any more. Although, for a while due to the enthusiasm they joined. How successful they were in the rest of the country I don't know because we left shortly after. I do know that some years later, I can't remember exactly when, we did come back to Detroit, and tried to make contact with some of the Auxiliary members like Babe Gelles. And they were very sad and very disappointed that nothing was being done for them. They were just members and occasionally they'd have a meeting. But there was no program.

INTERVIEWER: Why was that?

KRAUS: Well, I don't know, I wasn't involved so I don't know. They claimed that the only time they would be used was when there was a strike. Actually what should have been done with them was that some sort of an educational organization, including political activities, should have been worked out. But just to be there on call because there's a strike, that was not enough.

MR. KRAUS: Of course, I'm sure this is part of what we felt was the entire let-down in the organization.

INTERVIEWER: When you say organization, do you mean union?

MR. KRAUS: Union. Because our feeling about union, our hope about it, was that it should be a total organization. It would really remake the lives of the workers, and engage them in all kinds of activities. And actually since we remained in Flint for a little while--after I got fired along with several others in what was called the "unity group"--Victor Reuther and others, by Homer Martin, since I was immediately hired by the Flint local, we stayed on. And really, things were very exciting there, it was really something to see.

INTERVIEWER: After the strike?

MR. KRAUS: After the strike.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of things were happening?

MR. KRAUS: Well, the union really became the outstanding organization in the city. It was able to make changes in the city government. The city manager for instance was removed and a man put in there that the union okayed. The head of the police was changed,

MR. KRAUS: et cetera, et cetera. I remember once when I went back there, I was so surprised that Bob was having a meeting with the chief of police, and he had come right down to the Pengelly office! We'd really go places, I thought. And then there was an election campaign that took place, I think for city council members. And of course everybody wanted the union's support. After all, we represented the vast, the overwhelmimg majority of the people there. And we put up, I really don't remember the details, but we put up a couple of candidates for the city commissioners--that's what they call them. And there were all kinds of other activities: sports, and other things. I'm sure that it would have gone further, but what happened then was that the big factionalism [within the union] started and everybody was going after everybody else. For instance, Homer Martin meant to get rid of all the people that were opposed to him. The convention was taking place within a few months and the two sides were fighting. And it's true that most of the Flint people that were elected delegates to the convention were anti-Martin, and they were favorable to the "unity" side: Chevrolet, Fisher One, Buick, AC Spark Plug. And there was really no time after that, everybody was just preoccupied with these things.

KRAUS: I want to add one other thing that took place. The teachers went on strike, and the educational system actually was challenged. And they did [it] because the teachers told us of the need for changing the curriculum, and also various other things on the educational agenda. And we supported the teachers, we supported their strike at the time. But we also supported them after the strike [the pro-union] people on the Board of Education--do you remember that-- and really there was a change, and it could have gone much further. Actually what the city set out to do [with the union's help] was to, for the first time probably, have a real democratic system of government.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, this was one problem. Then too, there were very deep going problems with the companies, For instance, there was a strong anti-union attack started. It was after the Chrysler strike which took place in March, and the counter attack was terrific against the union. Because they claimed we couldn't control the workers. There would be all kinds of wildcat strikes, short strikes. The workers were really full of vim, and besides they hated the bosses and there were certain ones that they hated even worse, and they wanted their conditions improved, They wanted to make the union, count, and they did. Some of them overdid it, there was no real control for a while. We of course tried, talked to them, we explained that it was dangerous not to

MR. KRAUS: have discipline. And we were getting bad publicity. But nevertheless we understood that it was a normal situation, that it would straighten out. I remember I wrote a big front page editorial in the Flint Auto Worker on it, and actually I just raised hell with our opponents. I said, "Look, you should talk. None of these newspapers ever said a word [about conditions before the strike]. They never even tried to find out what the realities were inside a plant: how the workers were made to suffer the indignities, the horror in their lives. Now all of a sudden because all of this is being challenged, they're getting interested and they write big horror stories." I remember I was so disgusted with some of the newspaper guys who had been in town during the strike. And as long as it was very romantic, they wrote interestingly about it. But now they began to attack the union. Many of the big national newpapers had articles and they were really very nasty, at times.

INTERVIEWER: Were there other spin-off effects like the teachers and the Board of Education from the strike?

MR. KRAUS: There were a lot of other strikes. Strikes everywhere. Sit-downs in the stores. And they all came, they all stormed union headquarters.

KRAUS: They all wanted to be in the CIO.

MR. KRAUS: They wanted to be in our union, the UAW.

KRAUS: The Penny, I remember. . .

MR. KRAUS: J.C. Penny. That was in Flint, wasn't it?

KRAUS: Yes, that was in Flint. We'd get calls in the office, "We're on strike, what should we do? What should we do next? Come and see us, come and help us."

MR. KRAUS: "We're on strike, send somebody here, we want to get organized."

INTERVIEWER: What did you do, were you able to send help then?

KRAUS: Well, some of them, yes.

MR. KRAUS: Most of the time we did.

KRAUS: We'd go, or send somebody.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you're still putting out the paper, and what were you doing?

KRAUS: Well, I wasn't doing anything except continuing the organization with the women.

INTERVIEWER: How?

KRAUS: Having Auxiliary meetings.

INTERVIEWER: So they were still taking place?

KRAUS: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And what kinds of activities were the Auxiliaries doing at that time?

KRAUS: The elections, and also we were helping the other unions that were out on strike. That's the way Babe Gelles became a leader--she was in Detroit--but others too.

INTERVIEWER: So you were out as organizing brigades.

KRAUS & KRAUS: Oh, yes.

KRAUS: Always, we were very active.

MR. KRAUS: I wanted to make the point that this is really [a] very, very short [time space]. We didn't have [more than] just a few months. The convention took place in August. Right after the strike, we had left Flint and we went back to Detroit, because I was still editor. And in March, I think it was March when I was fired. It was right after the Chrysler strike. It was a big, big powerful strike, and we were all active. And so that takes us almost to April, I think it was then that I got fired, and we went up to Flint.

INTERVIEWER: So you moved back to Flint.

MR. KRAUS: Back to Flint. And we were there until August which was [the time of] the convention.

INTERVIEWER: And then what happened?

MR. KRAUS: Then of course Homer was re-elected and I went back to Flint, ostensibly to remain as editor. But he had no intentions of my being editor anymore, so I was fired from there too. And we had nothing to do in Flint anymore so we went back to Detroit. We lived there for a year and a half. What we did was got jobs on the WPA [Works Progress Administration]--don't you remember?

KRAUS: In Detroit?

MR. KRAUS: In Detroit. Well, how else did we live? You worked most of the time, because I still had a job to do in the fight against Homer Martin. Of course I got sick there for several months. Of course, we were all exhausted, we were all just overworked and I got sick. But we also went east for a couple of weeks with Walter and Mae Wolf [his wife] and Frank Win. . .

KRAUS: And took a vacation. [This was about October, 1937].

MR. KRAUS: Drove all the way. And that was when we met the Reuther family.

KRAUS: Yes, and we went to. . .

MR. KRAUS: Stopped at Wheeling, West Virginia. When we came back, we stayed in Detroit.

INTERVIEWER: How did you live?

MR. KRAUS: Well that's what I said, the WPA.

INTERVIEWER: Doing what though?

MR. KRAUS: I don't remember what you did.

KRAUS: I remember what I was doing, yes. Mr. Green. . .

MR. KRAUS: No, no, no, that was Cleveland.

KRAUS: That was Cleveland? I don't remember who he was, but I was doing some sort of accounting for him, and I haven't the slightest notion what it was all about. They taught me what I was supposed to do, and I was just doing it.

MR. KRAUS: Well, I worked there too for several months.

INTERVIEWER: Were activities continuing in Flint?

MR. KRAUS: Flint remember had been taken over. Homer Martin took it over and put in his own people. Bob was removed from the payroll. Mort was still an officer but later on in the fight against Homer Martin all the officers were removed: five of them, all [except R.J. Thomas]. Because Dick Frankensteen had joined us finally. He was a Homer Martin before, as was Wells, and they came over. This was during the height of the factional fight. Of course our program was to get the officers back, to have the action rescinded. So we fought. And at this point I worked as their publicity man, writing speeches for them because they had to speak all over the country. And Maurice Sugar was their

MR. KRAUS: lawyer. And finally the thing came to a head and we discovered certain things about Martin, and the fact that he was playing around with Henry Ford. Meanwhile, we had started holding caucuses of the locals in various sections of the country to organize a fight for a new convention because it was plain that Martin was selling the union out. And the CIO came into the picture too because Homer Martin was plotting to take the UAW back into the AF of L. And it took five months before we got the officers back. Of course, Homer hired goons, also, and put them on the union payroll.

INTERVIEWER: What year was this?

MR. KRAUS: This was 1938 and early 1939.

INTERVIEWER: And did it take its effect on the union in terms of the rank and file?

MR. KRAUS: Oh boy, did it! It went down, the union was very weak. It was also a period of [economic] recession, things were bad. And we had violence in the city, led by Heinie Pickert who was the police chief. There was trouble all over. The union was in a dangerous situation. So we decided to hold a convention. We did this in Cleveland in April of 1939 because we knew we had the support of the rank and file.

INTERVIEWER: This is the anti-Martin group?

MR. KRAUS: Anti-Martin group. And we had most of the unions, we would have big meetings and let the workers decide. It wasn't official, because it wasn't until the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] would hold elections that it could be official. But whenever we had elections after that, we'd always overwhelm Martin. But by that time Martin had officially affiliated with the AF of L, he had set up the UAW-AF of L, which was against the UAW-CIO. So there was no trouble, no problem in defeating Martin.

INTERVIEWER: And then who was elected at this time?

MR. KRAUS: Well, that's a long story, and it's a very sad story, because we disagreed with what was done. You've heard of the name of R.J. Thomas. He was the one officer who had been associated with Martin until the very end, the latest, the longest. And finally he came over when he saw [that] he had better, that Martin was going to lose. Our program was to put Addes in as president, and Mortimer in as secretary-treasurer or Dick Fankensteen as secretary-treasurer and Mortimer as vice-president. And the CIO didn't

MR. KRAUS: want that, they wanted to have Thomas in. And we were very much opposed to it because of his background, because he was such a blubbermouth. And besides, why should he be there? We needed a strong leadership. Lewis was not in the picture. He sent Hillman and Murray and their idea was--especially Hillman's--to prepare the way for Reuther. Reuther and the rest of the progressive forces had split. And Reuther was for R.J. Thomas at that time. As a matter of fact, at the convention, if we had wanted to, if we hadn't continued to support him for board member, he would have been defeated for the board. There's no question of it.

INTERVIEWER: So then what happened to you two?

KRAUS: We were finished.

MR. KRAUS: We were through. As a matter of fact, it had gotten to the point where we didn't want to stay anymore.

KRAUS: It was too painful.

MR. KRAUS: The whole thing had lost its real feeling of idealism.

KRAUS: Creativity.

MR. KRAUS: You know, its best features. We found even among the leaders, even our friends, a type of opportunism coming up, and fighting for jobs, and thinking about themselves, which we didn't like. And we could see that nothing but that kind of thing would go on thereafter. Even if the progressives won, and had the leadership. So we really didn't care to stay any more. I wanted to write anyway. After all, I had given enough time, and I had something to write about, I wanted to write the story of the strike. I had kept saying to Dorothy --Dorothy was eager to leave--and I said, "Well let's wait, let's first get the union back on its feet." And finally when we saw it was alright, that Martin was cleaned out, that the grave danger was past, we could leave without any feelings of regret. Except, of course, if it had been that kind of union we had envisioned, we would have loved to stay on. But it wasn't, so we went to Beaver Island.

INTERVIEWER: And you wrote?

MR. KRAUS: And I wrote the book, the first part. And then we went to the coast, the west coast.

INTERVIEWER: To do what? You had a job, Dorothy, at this time?

MR. KRAUS: Well, that was because Dorothy got the job, I didn't want to go.

KRAUS: That was when the aircraft industry was being organized and Mort had asked Henry and me to come. Henry didn't want to come, but I wanted to, so Henry finally said, "Alright I'll go along." And that's when we went.

MR. KRAUS: "I'll let you support me!" I remember telling you.

KRAUS: And I had a job supposedly. Well, I worked in the office because they didn't have anybody there.

INTERVIEWER: In the union office?

KRAUS: Union office. Mort was the organizer in charge of aircraft and I got twenty dollars a week which was unheard of, such high pay!

MR. KRAUS: It was enough to live on. We had a lovely studio apartment for about fifteen dollars a month.

KRAUS: And so we lived there and we started organizing, starting at Vultee Aircraft, and we would go out there five, six o'clock in the morning and give out leaflets.

MR. KRAUS: Same damn thing.

KRAUS: The same thing. Mort and another woman, another girl and I. And oh, they would just look at us as if we were dirt and the leaflets were all over, on the ground. Very few of them would take them. And if they took a leaflet, they would sort of glance at us, and. . .

MR. KRAUS: The same story.

KRAUS: But we kept up. Time and time again and one day after another. Well, we knew the conditions, of course, the conditions under which they were working.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any women in the plant?

KRAUS & KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did the men think it was strange that there was a woman out handing out leaflets?

KRAUS: They might have thought it was strange, but we really had very little contact with them until afterwards.

MR. KRAUS: Well, we won the election.

KRAUS: The election came up and we won, which was very, very good.

MR. KRAUS: And then I got back in--when the strike took place I came back because Mort said, "Look..." and so I said, "Okay, I'll come back." We put out a daily strike bulletin. And I stayed thereafter, because after we won that victory we knew it would have an effect on North American, which was a far more important plant, a General Motors subsidiary. It had many more workers, eight thousand workers, and I worked there. We also went up for a while, up into Seattle, Mort and I. The Boeing local there had revolted against the International Association of Machinists. And they wanted to come over to us. But actually it was too late already. And anyway, I had started being active at the North American plant and helping to organize, and especially to win the elections. So I went back there and the elections were held and we won. I forget now in April probably, 1941.

KRAUS: It was very hard.

MR. KRAUS: And negotiations went on and there was no breakthrough, they would not settle. See, in the elections we were competing with the IA of M [International Association of Machinists]. And we won by a very narrow margin. Because the IA of M had been established there. They had had a--what do you call it-- a "sweetheart agreement" with the company. You know, one of those. And there were these thousands of young workers in the plant. And they had never had any experience in the unions. So we had some tough problems.

KRAUS: Many of them had never worked before.

MR. KRAUS: They were youngsters just out of high school.

KRAUS: The companies advertised, "Come and help in this beautiful new industry. Learn how to fly."

MR. KRAUS: Yes, "You'll learn how to fly."

KRAUS: Many of them came on horseback.

MR. KRAUS: No, no, no. Dorothy, you always tell that they came on horseback.

KRAUS: They did, yes they did, I'm right.

MR. KRAUS: Just because there were one or two.

KRAUS: Well, alright, one or two. Very nice thing.

MR. KRAUS: So anyway we were worried. We had a very good group, but we were worried. We felt that we had to reach some kind of agreement, a direct contract since we had won the elections. And of course when the strike began we started getting hell from the East, from the UAW.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

MR. KRAUS: Mainly it was Reuther, who was only a board member. But nevertheless here was a chance for him to get after us. We were, after all, opponents. At this point, he--who later on during the war itself spoke out in favor of strikes--was accusing what he called the communists of sabotaging the war effort. After all, we were not in war. Didn't get into war until the Japanese attacked us six months later. So we had hell from them. From Dick Frankensteen too, who was the man that was in charge of aircraft for the UAW. But just shortly before the strike he said to Mortimer in my presence, "Mort, if you could only get me a strike for a couple of days, no more, three days, something like that so that I could really have some [leverage]." And of course when we did strike, that's when he attacked us, because he was carrying out orders, there's no doubt. Lewis was, of course, out of sympathy with them. I don't know if you know the role Lewis had at the time. He had been against Roosevelt being elected the third time and went into opposition to the national CIO line. He supported Wendell Wilkie. Murray was in office now, and Murray and Lewis had very serious differences. Sidney Hillman [too]. All of this I explained earlier to you. So finally we did pull the strike. And you know how they made so much of it: a strike, oh, a horrible thing. We didn't feel at all like that because we knew that there was no other way of defeating the North American Corporation with its plant manager, Charles Kindelberger, who was openly sympathetic to the Nazis! And we could have, there's no question of it. We had very good support. And as a matter of fact, before Roosevelt sent in the troops we had a huge picket line. It was not a sit-down, it was a walk-out strike. And the cops came in, there was a tremendous concentration of them, there must have been fifteen hundred cops there. And we had a battle royal. I'll never forget that because we knocked the hell out of the cops.

INTERVIEWER: Did you win the strike?

MR. KRAUS: No. We would have won it, there's no doubt. But Dick Frankensteen came in and he spoke to the local board and he said, "You've got to call the strike off." He knew damn well what it would mean to send those young people back to work. And the local leaders said, "Nothing, doing, we're not going to do it." And so he said, "Well, you'll have to call a meeting, and I'll talk to the workers." Big deal! He came to this bean field meeting outside of the North American plant and we had to fight with some of the workers because they wanted to attack him. We had to fight in order to defend him and they wouldn't let him talk. It was a tremendous meeting, I think there were ten thousand. Anyway, we had beaten the cops, we beat him, and so it was necessary to send in the troops, and they did.

INTERVIEWER: And that killed the strike.

MR. KRAUS: We were certain that Roosevelt would not send in the troops because of his whole previous record. But we didn't count on the fact that the CIO [and the UAW leaders] would destroy the strike by coming in and attacking the leadership, and thus prepare the way for Roosevelt to send in the troops.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened?

MR. KRAUS: We were through, that was the end. I never wanted to have anything to do with a union again.

KRAUS: We lived in Los Angeles where we had lived before, and then the war started. About four months later?

MR. KRAUS: Mid-December, with the attack on Pearl Harbor.

KRAUS: And at that time everybody was eager to help, of course.

MR. KRAUS: We lived on unemployment insurance for a while, and finally I got a job.

KRAUS: In the shipyard.

MR. KRAUS: No, first in Hollywood.

KRAUS: Oh, that's right, in Technicolor.

MR. KRAUS: In Technicolor, for several months, and then in the shipyard.

KRAUS: And then we moved to San Pedro.

MR. KRAUS: And that's another story. I belonged to the AF of L Boiler Makers, and boy, what a union.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work in the plant?

MR. KRAUS: Sure, I worked as a shipfitter's helper first, and then in the engineering department. They found out I was a mathematician, so I wrote several things on production, on how to get the workers involved in the fight for production.

INTERVIEWER Dorothy did you work?

KRAUS: No, not on a regular job. We lived in a housing project. And we realized the need to get the women involved. So I organized a nursery for children. We had some rather backward families that came from all over the country, some of them Southern. And then, too, we had an interracial project. We had Negro families living next to whites, and that created terrific problems. We were about two and a half miles from the city, we didn't have a doctor, we didn't have stores. And so all of that had to be organized, and that's what we did, we organized the entire project.

MR. KRAUS: Both of us got involved because we had union experience.

KRAUS: And it was a beautiful job. And the result of that work was another book that we did.

INTERVIEWER: Which was....

KRAUS: In the City was a Garden.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And then did you move back East, or. . .

MR. KRAUS: After the war we stayed on in the project because there was a chance for the people to buy their homes there. And this was then fought on the basis of its being a communist idea. So since everything else had been called communist, the people didn't care. But the only things is, after the war quite a number of people left, going home, and so new people came in. And evidently by pre-arrangement, they put in some really reactionary elements, officers. . .

KRAUS: From the army.

MR. KRAUS: And they started a McCarthyite red-baiting attack on us. It was a pre-play of the whole McCarthy era.

KRAUS: We didn't realize it at the time. But later on, in retrospect, knowing what the McCarthy situation did to other people, we realized that this was a kind of rehearsal. They were rehearsing on us.

INTERVIEWER: And so the outcome was that you left.

KRAUS: Yes, we left.

MR. KRAUS: We stayed on for about a year.

KRAUS: We fought. . .

MR. KRAUS: . . .fighting because we wanted to win [these homes for the people]. Because those guys were opposed to the plan.

KRAUS: Of buying our houses.

MR. KRAUS: They called it communist. But we forced it down their throats, and we won, from that standpoint, even though they red-baited us like hell. There was one prominent communist who was the wife of a longshoreman, and they wanted to have her expelled. Oh yes, and there was a communist from the People's World, who had just moved in.

KRAUS: He and his family. He was a veteran.

MR. KRAUS: So, the housing commission sent them into our project [when their turn came]. And it was found out, and so, "Oh boy, this communist has to leave." Well, we wouldn't stand for that, we put on a campaign to defend his rights. And so that also made us communist. It was a battle from then on. But nevertheless we did fight until we put over a victory for the acquisition of the housing project. We even got the Navy, who had priority rights in acquiring it for their officers, we got them to step out in our favor.

KRAUS: We also realized afterwards that the business [building] association[was interested in buying the project]. It was a very choice, beautiful place.

MR. KRAUS Way up a beautiful hill.

KRAUS: And it would have made marvelous houses from their point of view. So they too wanted us out, and they were in cahoots with those officers who had come in to fight the plan.

MR. KRAUS: The San Pedro newspaper, everybody began to attack us. We sent a delegation down to the paper and the editor said, "What do you mean, you're not communists?" There were eight, ten of us, maybe. He says, "You know, I've been watching you from the very beginning. First you were for nurseries and that's communist." But I said to myself, well, after all, maybe nurseries are important for the war.

MR. KRAUS: "And then you were for the prepaid medical plan." We actually established one; there was some arrangement with the state, and we got some doctors in. "When you did that I said, "They surely are communist.'' And he said, "And now they're for cooperative homes? My God, what more--what better proof do I need?" And he wrote about that in the paper.

INTERVIEWER: And what happened when you came to New York?

MR. KRAUS: Well, we didn't go directly to New York, we lived in. . .

KRAUS: Los Angeles.

MR. KRAUS: . . .Los Angeles for a couple of years. We bought a house. But there were no jobs, and it was very hard, so we decided to go to New York, in 1949. But shortly before that we published my book, The Many and the Few.

INTERVIEWER: Right, and then the second one.

MR. KRAUS: It was a success, by the way. What was it, about eight thousand copies? We sold. . .

INTERVIEWER: Hand by hand?

MR. KRAUS: To unions.

KRAUS: Almost all of them.

MR. KRAUS: Many locals, I went to.

KRAUS: Did plenty of work.

MR. KRAUS: By that time of course Reuther was very unfriendly. But I went right into his own union and I spoke to the assembled education directors and committees.

INTERVIEWER: And then how did you end up in France is my next [question].

MR. KRAUS: Well, finally jobs were hard to get, as you know.

INTERVIEWER: This was in the fifties now?

MR. KRAUS: 1953, 1953, 1955. And Dorothy got a job after a while.

KRAUS: I worked at. . .

MR. KRAUS: . . .at B.Altman's. And I would get a job at one of the unions doing something. Put out a big brochure once for

MR. KRAUS: one of the unions. These were the few left-wing unions still. And then, finally, a couple of years before we left, I got this job through an old friend, a newspaper guy in Cincinnati, whom I met on the street, who was working for a medical journal. And he said, "Look...." I said, "I don't know anything about medicine, why are you asking me?" And he says, "Yeah, but you're a smart guy, you can learn."

KRAUS: He wasn't a medical reporter either.

MR. KRAUS: He was the news editor for this journal, it was published by a big association. And I said, "Well, I'll try." And they continued. And finally--they put out a beautiful paper for Upjohn--and Dorothy once saw it. She saw a dateline which said Paris, another one which said Rome, and Dorothy said, "You mean to say they have reporters in those cities? How about you? Let's go back." We hadn't been back to Europe for twenty-five years. So I said, "Well, I'll ask my boss." And I did, and he says, "What? You know French?" And I said, "Well, I think so, I think I could pick it up again." And he said, "Oh, boy, that would be great."

INTERVIEWER: So you came here out of desire, not necessarily out of persecution?

MR. KRAUS: No, no.

KRAUS: Not persecution, there were just no jobs.

INTERVIEWER: Were you blacklisted as such at that time, or was it not. . .

MR. KRAUS: Sure.

KRAUS: Blacklisted.

MR. KRAUS: I would get a job, I'd apply, and by that point they had become so efficient, all you had to do was apply and they had a system. And they'd say, "Well, you know, we've got somebody better, better equipped...."

INTERVIEWER: You were never tried in any way?

KRAUS: No.

INTERVIEWER: These are now some additional questions that were not asked last week. Henry and Dorothy both, at this point, in retrospect, and I realize that we're asking in retrospect, what do you feel was the major significance of the Flint strike?

MR. KRAUS: Well, of course, what it accomplished was tremendous. The fact that it organized the industry, and not only that but it released an enormous organizational spirit throughout the country. And it changed the whole course of labor history. The industrial workers had not been organized up to then so it helped to improve their participation, the voice of the workers in the plant and in their working destiny. And of course it improved their pay, their other conditions in the field, in life. Aside from that, of course, it did much to permanently shift the whole political weight in the United States so that now you had organized groups of working class union people--millions--who could serve as a definitely progressive element in industry, and in the country. So that every political leader, from the national scope down to below, would have to take that group, that powerful element, into account. They hadn't in the past. The president, congress would have to--whether they were progressive or anti-reactionary, or conservative--they still would have to take that group into account. Also when you consider the total picture of world history, which very soon after was going to be threatened by fascism in a way that no one had ever dreamt of, and the fact that the United States had to play such a critical role in it, well, the fact that U.S. labor was organized, had such force and such importance, also served as a positive factor of international significance in the fight for freedom against fascism.

INTERVIEWER: Let me, before you go on with that, did it basically make organizing at other plants easier?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, of course, starting with Michigan at other centers. But in Michigan we were just overwhelmed, they came in so fast, it was like a tidal wave. It wasn't because they were necessarily inspired, it's just that they said, well, they could accomplish it, we have our problems, and we suffered for all these years, so let's do the same. And they caught on to the point where we just couldn't do any more. And then of course it spread to other industries, steel, aluminum, oil, et cetera.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think its significance was in terms of the individuals in Flint,to participate?

MR. KRAUS: Well, of course this was somewhat less satisfactory because it was our idea, our outlook that the union--maybe we were wrong--[that] basically economic organization can't accomplish everything. Certainly not in the American background because unionism there is too apolitical. In any case, it

MR. KRAUS: has always been involved with conservative political groups, the big parties and so on. Our view was more radical, more progressive, basically progressive. We were hoping that it would cause the workers to participate, in their own communities and beyond, to change their way of life, to improve education, improve culture, improve everything.

INTERVIEWER: And you don't think that was realized?

MR. KRAUS: No. And then also we wanted, we were hoping that the workers themselves would develop--workers and their families, their wives and so on--would develop a sense of strength, a sense of greater participation. Well, you know, we found that by the time we left this had fallen through completely. Actually, we think that when Reuther took over, despite [the fact that] maybe he had some more sprightly ideas, what to do here, there, and the other, his negotiating for certain things was maybe on a more advanced and modernistic level, but still as far as the union was concerned, it was not his concern to make it a really live, vital, vibrant democratic thing, with mass participation. Because he was as much worried by that sort of thing as any of the old leaders would have been in the AF of L. This sort of thing is too uncontrollable from the standpoint of a man who wants to keep firm control himself.

INTERVIEWER: Let me backtrack a minute. There was for a while directly after the Flint strike, there was some sort of spin off effect in terms of people becoming involved in local issues.

MR. KRAUS: Yes, yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What happened then in 1939, what destroyed this sense of. . .

MR. KRAUS: You see, after 1937, after the two big strikes took place, Homer Martin came in with his tremendous factionalism. I feel it was more than just merely a political thing or fear thing, or personal thing. I think that there was something more involved, but I'm not going to say anything about that because I don't want to commit myself legalistically. His activity became sheer factionalism, destroying the very elements that had built the union. And so he started this factionalism in Flint as well as everywhere else. Vic Reuther and I were the first two that were fired and so I immediately went up to Flint and put out the Flint Auto Worker there. Flint was doing things, or trying to do things. I mentioned earlier how they got into the local election and other things like that, and of course everybody helped in strikes and organizing other places. But there wasn't enough time because there was this terrible

MR. KRAUS: factionalism. You had to fight at every meeting. Martin had all kinds of people there, and a lot of the old AF of L crowd and some very dubious characters joined in. They were delighted to come back into action, even Black Legionnaires. You can't imagine the difficulties in working that way at every meeting--and there were all kinds of committee meetings, besides. You had to be there, you had to be fighting all the time against their insidious attacks. It was the time, too when there was so much agitation about wildcat strikes and it was causing a lot of havoc. But a lot of them also, I'm sure, were pushed by some of these elements irresponsibly.

INTERVIEWER: So do you think, then, that what happened was that things were sort of calmed, that people were tamed again in Flint due to. . .

MR. KRAUS: They weren't tamed, Pat. What happened was that this factionalism continued and grew and grew so that the union was weakened. The union was just torn to pieces. When a guy you felt was really trying to wreck the union, you had to fight for the union rather than [to better working] conditions!

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so then I guess what I want to get at is: do you feel then that the damage was from within the union rather than, let's say the industrialists, GM trying to. . .

MR. KRAUS: Of course they tried. You see, because for a certain time after the strike, they figured, "Now we're going to really smash the union." So a lot of these guys, these foremen and superintendents, would act in the old way, really try to put the pressure on and abuse the guys. Well, that didn't last very long. Some of them were just literally thrown out of the plant because the workers were just too conscious of their strength; they had won something and they weren't going to be put off by these guys. A number of foremen and even top managers had to be removed by the company. No, it was not that, but the long lasting damage was the factionalism.

INTERVIEWER: Within the union.

MR. KRAUS: And of course Homer Martin got excellent help from Lovestone, and the Lovestonites. Jay Lovestone, who was leader of the so-called Communist Party opposition, sent in his people and stirred up things, making it a completely political thing--he was a past master at it. Of course you know the story: 1938, 1939, Homer almost smashed the union and [we] couldn't go after Ford, which was our next goal. And we should have been able to organize Ford at that

MR. KRAUS: point, [but] couldn't do it, couldn't do it until after Martin was gotten rid of. This didn't happen until May 1939, at the Cleveland Convention, when finally we got rid of Martin. He was so hated and inept. Of course, at first, let me say that he was very popular, a man whose name was in the paper all the time: Homer Martin, throughout the country. And he spoke, went out--he was invited and loved it. And it's pretty damn hard to go up against such publicity, when most of the thousands of new members only knew about what they read in the papers. But he lost that very fast because he was so inept, he was so ridiculous. The so-called progressive elements were so, their background had been so good and so widespread throughout the union, and their efforts after all were constructive--where it was possible to be constructive--that they were able to win gains for the workers. And then Martin became anti-CIO. I think it was a critical thing, the fact that he began to attack the CIO.

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy, what do you feel that the effect of all this political activity, the worker participation in Flint, did it have any long lasting, any effect?

KRAUS: I would say that the end result was rather sad.

INTERVIEWER: Well, before the end result, did it initially have any effect on the lives?

KRAUS: Initially it did, initially it helped. I would speak for Flint, and I think the same thing is true among the working women, and the wives of workers. It brought them forward, it made them feel that they were participating. They were part of this immense movement, which was the union movement. And that was a tremendous advancement. For example in Flint at the end of the strikes, the teacher's union organized for the first time. They had always worked under bad conditions, and this was tackling the educational system. And the children, the youngsters, were with the teachers, and it was something that the children were learning, too.

MR. KRAUS: It was a minority of the teachers.

KRAUS: It was a minority of the teachers, but nevertheless it meant that the union became preoccupied in getting somebody elected on the educational board.

MR. KRAUS: They had fired several teachers in Flint--I think one name was Eleanor Gordon, wasn't it something like that--and the

MR. KRAUS: union helped to reinstate her.

INTERVIEWER: The teacher's union?

MR. KRAUS: Well, no, the UAW.

KRAUS: So you see, all of that was really, I would say, the most democratic advancement for the women that I have ever seen anywhere. But as Henry mentioned, unfortunately, there was the factionalism. Nobody had any time to spend with the women or even with the men, except those who were very active in the union and they knew what was going on. Others fell away because they said, "Look, we don't know what it's all about. Why was Homer Martin such a big man?" And for a long time you couldn't come out and say, by gosh, that he was a stool pigeon, because you didn't dare. After all, he was your president. Further, once factionalism was settled and the union came into its own again, then the problem came up for them as to what to do with this advanced group of women. Whether they were the wives or the workers themselves in the plants. And here I feel, the International Union didn't do a good job. They did a very, very poor job for the women. The only thing they thought about the women was the fact that they should help whenever they were needed in a strike, and that's about all they thought of.

INTERVIEWER: An emergency situation.

KRAUS: An emergency. And they would call them, and they'd go down. Well, that wasn't enough. It wasn't a real education for the women. The women remained at home. They went right back into the kitchen, and as one of our friends said, "A women's place is in the stove," [That was Les Pine, a marvelous raconteur]and that's where they remained. As far as the militant women, they continued. But there was a very small handful of them. What the educational department did for the women I never knew. I never found out. They had some meetings, they taught them parliamentary procedure! A woman sitting at home isn't particularly interested in parliamentary procedure, she never chairs a meeting, or if she does she'll learn then. Politically they were not advanced, politically it was nothing, absolutely nil. What they did during other elections I don't know. But certainly they couldn't have done much because I remember a couple of years later we went back to Detroit and it was pathetic. I met with some of the active auxiliary people, and they were very sad, and they said nothing is being done, and that was it.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of classes or things should the union have done for education?

KRAUS: I think to begin with, the union must include political classes. This we have learned since we have been living in Europe. The unions here are political. They understand what is at stake when somebody is running. When a mayor or some other person is running for office they want to know what he is going to do, and they have meeting with them, they talk with him, they understand it, and they read about it. They are much more informed politically of what's going on in the country. You take a country like France and the unions here know what's going on. That does not negate the fact that they're asking for more pay, or that when the cost of living rises that their "SMIG" doesn't have to go up. On the contrary, they understand it better. But in the States it was left only with the pork chops.

INTERVIEWER: Was this true for the men, too?

MR. KRAUS: Sure.

KRAUS: I think it was, and Henry can add to that, but I certainly do. But it certainly killed the initiative, the beginning of the marvelous initiative among the women, because the women didn't have anything to go back to except to their homes.

INTERVIEWER: Were they unhappy? I mean, did they have difficulties, do you think, going back to their homes?

KRAUS: I don't know about many of them, but those who had been active, when I met with them a few years later--I don't remember exactly how many years it was--they were very unhappy.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Let me just summarize. What you're basically saying is that the union had no need, or felt there was no need for any sort of ongoing organization of women, and just wanted emergency help when necessary.

KRAUS: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Now. . .

MR. KRAUS: I want to. . .

INTERVIEWER: Wait, you mentioned, though, that they hired an organizer?

KRAUS: They had a women's organizer.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know who she was?

KRAUS: She was Eve Stone.

MR. KRAUS: Oh, no, no , no, that was during the Homer Martin period. Well, there was another one. I'm sorry, I don't remember her name. They've always had, they have an organizer now, too.

MR. KRAUS: Sure, they have a women's department. But that's not the point, though. It has to be throrough-going. Of course society has to be changed a little, too, but nevertheless the union could do a lot. Especially a union as bright and alert as the UAW has been in many other respects. But I wanted to say something, too, because this had to do with you asking what do you think about it now--it's sort of long past--and how do you regard it and the future?

INTERVIEWER: The union.

MR. KRAUS: Yes. Of course we mustn't exaggerate its influence, especially after so many years, and so much of it has become invisible or lost in the whole jumble of things. But we used to feel, shall I say, disappointed? For years. As Dorothy says, when we'd go back to Detroit, we'd go to a union meeting, and there would be fifteen or twenty people in the hall. It was just like the old AF of L days--everything was run by just a tiny handful. All of the seething activity was gone. Maybe, on a plant level it was different: they maybe had steward's meetings and committeemen's meetings that were more interesting. Years and years later I'd often thing, what was the point of the strike? And I heard others asking the same question. What was the point of going through this terrific battle and winning this great victory? It's all lost. This was the general view. Now I didn't exactly feel that, but nevertheless I imagine I was very discouraged over a period of years. And then all of a sudden, about ten years ago maybe--perhaps it had something to do with events in the States, you know, 1965, 1968--and I started thinking: look, what kind of an attitude is this? It's crazy. If nothing else, the unions were established. There were no unions before. They were established. And they still exist. They are powerful, they're necessary, they serve a great purpose, and they have improved the conditions of working people even though they haven't accomplished all they could have even in this field. Nevertheless, they have done this. And they, the apparatus is there for some future utilization if the time comes, a call comes for them, even though it's a new generation entirely. Nevertheless they are there. So

MR. KRAUS: I began to say that to friends, old-timers, I said, "Look at what we did. It doesn't matter if our names have been wiped off the books or anything like that. What's that got to do with it? The fact is that the union is there, and we must have the feeling that we helped to bring this about." And then it started happening. Other things came into the picture. Like all the young people, like yourself, started talking, started getting interested again, whereas the generation of young people before you weren't. McCarthyism had marked them, scared them, and all they wanted to do was the safe thing: get along, and get a good job, have a few comforts. They wouldn't risk anything like our generation had done, which was depressing. But now the new recent developments proved to me that the thing wasn't wasted, that our effort--small as it was and only a part of the whole--nevertheless did help. [It] did enter in as an ingredient which can now be picked up and can be utilized by the young people--the new crop. I'm not saying this just because it's you [Pat], but I've said it to several people. We got into an argument just a short while ago with some old friends and we said, "Look, you say that nobody cares--why look, just take a few names. Elsa Rassbach is making a movie. There's Debra Bernhardt, this fantastic gal." There's you, the movies that we saw that young women had done. When we were in Detroit this last winter at a Smithsonian exhibition at the Reuther Library, we were approached about the union by young people. I was speaking to a class--I think it was in the labor history--and they shoved terrific questions at me, dozens of questions. And they were all young people. And I say that this is certainly very heartening proof of the efficacy, the meaningfulness of what we did.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Anything else?

KRAUS: I want to add the following. While Henry thinks that he was discouraged, I must say for myself that I was only discouraged at first and it was a blow to have to leave the union that you worked so hard for and you felt part of. But after we had gone and we sort of recuperated from the initial shock, I never felt that it was a lost cause or that it was something that maybe we spent all of this time--well, I won't say wasted--but you know, for nothing. But I felt over and over again, especially during the time of the Hitler period, that this organization of the unions was the greatest bulwark against fascism, no matter where it is. And America has the potential of fascism, too.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think the unions can be. . .

KRAUS: Because they understand much more than those that are not organized.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, one last question. In summary, in retrospect, if you had it to do over again, would you?

MR. KRAUS: Oh, of course.

KRAUS: Right away.

MR. KRAUS: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

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