

(INTERVIEW WITH NANCY ALLEN)  
(VERSION 1.0 REVISED NOVEMBER 1991)

It seems like the things I remember about the city is that the city was really clean. And it wasn't clean so much because it was the responsibility of the city to keep it clean but the people who lived in the city helped to keep it clean. I can remember when you cut the lawn, you'd wash the sidewalk and the curbs with soap and water and sweep it with a broom and then rinse it down.

I played primarily with boys all the time. I think I still get along better with men, (I have three sons and a husband that I share my thoughts with now), not that I was a Tomboy. I played with them because I liked being the lady, the one that they had to watch out for..... take care of.

Daddy started out as part of the group that you've probably been interviewing a lot. He was involved in politics and involved in getting the unions organized. He worked at Ford Motor Co. for awhile and never seen the time when they weren't trying to organize the unions. I can remember being on that bridge, the famous overpass bridge. Just as a little kid, because daddy took me everywhere.

I was the first born, so, he didn't have a son to take, all he had was this little scared daughter. I was scared of everything. But I was with my dad so you wouldn't be that scared. I had my little placard cards and we marched across the bridge. I had my little union hat on with all my little buttons and things. I didn't dodge any bullets but we did treat people at our house that had been wounded because of the

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strikes.

Dad was not a person that belonged to any of the organizations in the community. He never belonged to the Cotillion, although many of his friends did, nor was he part of the Macarema Club. The only thing he ever joined was when they were putting forth the effort to get the unions organized. He would belong to things like that if they had a goal like fighting for Civil Rights, that kind of thing. But he would not belong to any of the other elite organizations. My mother was usually in the grocery store, my dad would be in the pool room and we had somebody usually at the house. So, my parents were right there at our fingertips.

I remember as a child, my Aunt. She lived on W. Grand Blvd. In the summer, we would sleep out there on the Island in the middle of the Blvd. Like now you have air-conditioning. Nobody had air-conditioning back in those days. She lived in an apartment on the Blvd. It was a house but it had units. When we spent the night with her in the summer we used to stay out on the island. We had cots. I can remember my cot that I had.

Daddy's ideas were always the kind that you kind of twist your face up because they were not what everyone was doing at the time. And then a couple years later everybody was doing that. He was always just a little bit ahead of his time.

I can remember the war. Everything was rationed. I can remember some little brown stamps. You'd have to have so many

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stamps for sugar, bread, butter. And I can remember the blackouts. You were supposed to turn out your lights but instead, we had those real heavy dark shades that you'd pull down.

I decided I would be a dietitian. And that's what I studied to be at Wayne State University. I took up nutrition and dietetics and I got my degree in dietetics. That's when I first ran into my first experience with any kind of racial prejudice. After I graduated from college and I'm ready to go get a job as a dietitian, I went to Wayne's Placement Center, and my counselor gave my credentials over the telephone... that was to a hospital in Detroit, and they said, "Oh wow! Perfect! Just what we're looking for! We want somebody just out of school." They said, "Send her over." And I walked in and I said, "I'm Mrs. Allen from Wayne State University, etc. People would come and look at me and then they would go back. Others would come and look and then they would go back. So, finally this lady came and she sat and she looked me and she never said anything, then, she got up and she went and got another lady. So, finally they said that they thought they had something, a position, but it just so happens that the position they thought they were gonna have was not going to materialize. The person was going to stay on at the hospital that they thought was going to be leaving and "Thank you for coming." That was experience number one.

The next place I went was an industrial complex and the

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lady came out and she told me that I was just too young, that I had to supervise older women and my age, I just couldn't handle it, I was just too young. Then I got hired at another hospital. The lady who interviewed me was real impressed and gave me all the papers and things to fill out and said the only thing I had to do was take my physical and she would call me the next day and give me a date for my physical. Then she didn't call. Then she didn't call the next day. I said, "Well, I'll call her." So, I called her and she apologized and told me that even though she had hired me, her hires had to be approved by the Board and that when she presented it to the Board that they didn't accept me.