I came to Michigan in 1926. At the time I was 16 years old. When I came to Michigan, I came to Saginaw. that's where my Dad lived. My mother and father were divorced when I was 10, going on 11. I stayed with my mother until she remarried and there was that kind of friction that does occur on occasions. I went to school for a short while but I was overanxious to meet my brother and sister and mother and stepfather who had also migrated to Michigan by then. I left Saginaw and came to Detroit.

This neighborhood at one time was fairly exclusive, just a little above the norm. My mother worked in this neighborhood as a day worker, as a cook and various other positions. When I was in school, I used to come in this neighborhood; and while she worked, I would get a job washing windows or cutting the grass. That was my money that I used to go to the Graystone, to the dances. As I got acquainted with the neighborhood, I would work for other people. Wash the windows for the ladies and things like that. I would bring my pail and a chamois and squeegee when I went to visit my mother, and I would find other work. I was walking through the neighborhood one day: I was on Calvert. I had the pail in my hand and the squeegee and the chamois. The police stopped me and asked what I was doing in that neighborhood. I said, "You can see what I'm doing. I'm washing windows." They asked who sent for me. I said my mother works in this neighborhood. They put me in the police car and drove me all

the way to Grand Boulevard and Woodward and let me out. They said they didn't want to catch me in this neighborhood anymore. These are the kind of experiences that can create a bitterness that will stay with you all you life.

Detroit in those days was quite different from what it is now, I can assure you that. The black community was not organized. Those who were, were organized as Republicans because they felt a responsibility to support the party that had produced Abraham Lincoln. Those who didn't agree with them didn't vote at all because they didn't feel welcomed to the Democratic party which was primarily based in the South at the time. Almost every southern state in those days was Democratic.

After I graduated from high school, I had a scholarship. Being a young black, there were not too many inducements to encourage you to do too much but I did have the scholarship--$400 and I could choose the school that I wanted to utilize this scholarship at. It was enough money for a half term so I decided I wanted to go to the University of Nebraska. Most discouraging 6 months I ever spent in my life. I couldn't stay on campus or any of the student establishments. I had to find a black family to stay with. The teachers were very cold and indifferent, not all of them but too many of them. Even before the term expired, I left and came home. Discouragement put a very sour note in my mental make-up to the point where I decided I would just go

get a job somewhere and forget it.

Well, this is depression days, so jobs, especially for a young black in Detroit Michigan, meant find a job washing dishes in a restaurant or similar work of that time. Any other type of job, such as porter in a store or jobs of that type, went to men who had families. Street cleaning was the property of the immigrants... Russians and Italians and Poles. So you couldn't get a job sweeping streets. Most of the more menial jobs were manned by Polish-Americans, German-Americans, Swedish-Americans, Italian-Americans. So there was this poor element of the city vying against each other for position. Welfare was not an organized thing then. If a family was fortunate enough to get some welfare help, that was for a month or two or three. It was not a permanent thing. There was quite a scratching among the people to live, to exist.

The black people were forced to live in the downtown area below Jefferson, below Vernor, down toward the river and east of Russell, east of Riopelle. That was called Black Bottom. Before I came here, my family lived in that area too; but as the neighborhood spread as a consequence of the migration of blacks from the south, they advanced as far north as Willis Avenue and Canfield Avenue, east of Beaubien, and as far north as Canfield, Garfield and Willis.

Some time in the 30's, maybe in the latter part of the 20's, President Roosevelt, who was at that time governor of

New York, indicated that he would be a candidate for the Democratic party, there was some activity in the black neighborhood. A fellow by the name of Bledsoe, an attorney, was very outspoken in favor of Blacks being involved with the Democratic party, especially on behalf of Roosevelt. He in my opinion was the vanguard leader of the transition of Blacks into the Democratic party and losing their loyalty to the Republicans because they "freed the slaves." Because of him there were quite a few others who gradually swelled the ranks of Black Democratics. This was particularly interesting to me because I at the time was not old enough to vote. I have always boasted that when I became eligible to vote that Roosevelt was the Messiah that we had been hoping would come along, so I voted for Roosevelt. The young Blacks who were able to vote and who had been activated were very strongly Democratic. In many cases they had problems with family because of the Republican loyalty. Most of their family in those days were the sons and daughters of ex-slaves who had been freed by Abraham Lincoln. There was a considerable amount of confusion in the Black neighborhoods. I say the Black neighborhoods because they were herded in those days, herded into neighborhoods. These are the late 20's and early 30's.

With the success of President Roosevelt, so-called alphabet programs were enacted... WPA, PWA, CWA. These were works programs. Then the CCC camps, Civilian Conservation Corps. It was semi-military because they had the camps and

uniforms and things like that. They supplied the youngsters with a certain stipend that was sent to the family. This was young adults. Very widespread. Many of the forests in Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, New York were re-planted by these youngsters. My brother was in the CCC camp.

The support wasn't so much for Roosevelt as it was against Hoover. President Hoover had been seemingly indifferent to the plight of the unemployed. There were thousands and thousands of people out of work, and there was no organized assistance to any extent. Here in Michigan, the Ford Motor Company, who was the largest employer at that time, the Rouge plant had over 100,000 people working in it, had closed down because the Model T had become so passe that they weren't selling. The General Motors corporation had begun to concentrate on the Chevrolet. It had outsold Ford for two consecutive years. He closed the plant down for a transition into an eight cylinder automobile. This was for months and months that the plant was closed and it just seemed like the whole city became stagnant. The pressure intensified. One of the events that brought it into focus was the so-called Ford Hunger March in 1932. This is where a number of Ford workers and allies, under the leadership of an organization that was called the Unemployed Council, imposed this march on the Ford Motor Company. They made this trek out there, and the organization called for them to march back and forth down

Miller Road in front of the plant. This was in April 1932. The plant had closed a year or so before that. There were still people working in there, but for all intents and purposes massive production was over.

Their purpose was to bring attention to the plight of Ford workers who were out of work but they were greeted with water hoses and shots. Harry Bennet was in charge. Five men were killed... four Whites and one Black. We were able to discover the graves of the four Whites in later years. I was a catalyst behind that in that I got the union to mark the graves. The Black fellow, had been refused permission to be buried in the cemetery with his brothers, so his body lay in the undertakers for several weeks until finally a group got together and had it cremated. They flew the ashes over the Rouge Plant and scattered them over the plant. That's one of those untold stories.

When the shots were fired, people scattered. A number of people were injured with shots in their arm, leg, or whatever. They were dragged and hidden away because as Ford workers, that meant that they never would work at Fords anymore. They never went to hospitals or anything like that. There were so many organizations that joined in this hunger march, some by invitation, others just because they had heard of it. Some church groups, some revolutionary party groups, the Communist party, the Socialist party, the Proletariat party. Then there was a group of Baptists. It was a White Sunday school. Then

there were several Black groups.

Stanley Nowak was very much involved in organizing Ford. He was part of a weekly radio program sponsored by one of the Polish newspapers. When we were organizing Ford Motor Company, he helped us to get some time on that program. I spoke on that program three times during the Ford organizing days.

Shortly after this hunger march took place, an effort was made to organize the Ford workers into what was known as the Auto Workers Union. The way I got into this was being young and attending all of these rallies and meetings, I found that you didn't have to be a Ford worker to join the Auto Workers Union. You didn't have to be an auto worker. If you were the wife or daughter or son of an auto worker you were still eligible so I joined the Auto Workers Union. It cost me a quarter a month. That way I was able to get in a lot of activities. I was not working at the time. I think I had gone to Northern High School at the time. Northern was 95 percent Jewish and maybe 1 percent black. All the rest was the other Americans. I made friends in those days that are still friends.