

Cass Corridor Oral History Project

Detroit, MI

Marilyn Sundstrom

Interviewed by

Elizabeth Nicholson

November 12, 2015

Detroit, Michigan

As part of the Oral History Class in the School of Library and Information Science

Kim Schroeder, Instructor

Fall 2015

ID: UP002659_Sundstrom

Date [inclusive]: 1935- 2015

Dates [Bulk]: 1941- 2015

Physical Description: 1 .WAV file (514.95 MB) and 1 .MP3 file (70.11 MB)

Language: Material entirely in English.

Abstract:

Born in Flint, Michigan in 1935, Marilyn Sundstrom moved to Detroit in 1941. Living just outside the Cass Corridor, she recalls growing up in that area. She attended Cass Technical High School in 1950 and in 1953 started attending the Harper University Hospital's Nursing Program. At that time, Harper was affiliated with Wayne State University and students attended select classes on Wayne State's campus. Marilyn Sundstrom recounts time as a student on the Wayne State University Campus, how the Cass Corridor has changed through time, and the redevelopment of the Cass Corridor as Midtown.

Restrictions: Material is open for research.

Original Format: The original format of the recording is a .WAV file.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms:

"Cass Corridor Oral History Project, Marilyn Sundstrom Interview, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

Controlled Access Headings:

- Wayne State University
- Cass Corridor (Detroit, Mich.)
- Cass Technical High School
- North Cass Community Garden
- Harper University Hospital
- Detroit Medical Center. Harper University Hospital
- Nursing students—Michigan—Detroit
- Urban renewal
- Urban redevelopment
- Midtown, Inc.
- Dwyer, Bernie
- Brewster Projects

- Oral histories
- Transcripts
- Sound recording

Cass Corridor Oral History Project
Walter P. Reuther Library
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI

Transcript of interview conducted November 12, 2015 with:

Marilyn Sundstrom in Detroit, Michigan

By: Elizabeth Nicholson

(Interviewer Last Name): Nicholson

(Narrator Last Name): Sundstrom

NICHOLSON: This Elizabeth Nicholson interviewing Marilyn Sundstrom for the Cass Corridor Oral History Project.

When and where were you born?

SUNDSTROM: I was born in Flint, Michigan in 1935. Lived there until we were—I was 4. We moved to Indianapolis until I was 6, and we moved to Detroit in 1941. Just at the onset of the war.

NICHOLSON: okay.

SUNDSTROM: I remember it was December, we moved here.

NICHOLSON: And where in Detroit did you move?

SUNDSTROM: We lived, uh, in the area that was Grand River and West Grand Blvd. near the old Northwestern High School that was on the corner. And I went to the grade school Mar until grade 8, then McMichael [Middle School] I went there for grade 9. And in 1950 I went to Cass Tech graduated from there in '53.

NICHOLSON: What was it like growing up in that area?

SUNDSTROM: It was nice, um. It was a multi-racial neighborhood back in the day. Which was unusual because there was sort of a racial divide, it um, I think the street was called Tireman but I'm not sure. And we lived in a mixed neighborhood. It was a mix of blue collar I believe, um, close to the street car line and then it turned into a bus line. It was fine. There were all kinds of young people, you know, kids. And we walked to school. And that was the nice part.

NICHOLSON: What was it like to attend Cass Tech?

SUNDSTROM: It was interesting. I decided I wanted to go to Cass because I didn't want to go to the High School my brother went to. And I was tired of being his little sister. And so going to Cass was wonderful it was a great experience. I'm still in touch with classmates. There was this threat that they hung over you. If you didn't perform academically you would be sent back to your neighborhood school. And everybody just shaped up. So I met a lot of interesting people and as I said I'm still in touch with many of them because we have a very active reunion committee and we're planning our 63rd or fourth [64th] for next September.

NICHOLSON: That's nice.

SUNDSTROM: Yes so it will be in downtown Detroit again, because we were a downtown school, an inner city school so we decided we would have our reunions in the city rather than the suburbs like they had been in the past.

NICHOLSON: Well that's nice!

SUNDSTROM: mmm, hmmm. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: What kind of classes did you take there?

SUNDSTROM: I was in the pre-nursing and science program. So there was a heavy emphasis on science projects and classes. I took, I think, 3 years of some kind of food and nutrition programs. But the science classes were wonderful because when I went to nursing school, my first year of nursing school was just a review of what I already had at Cass. So it was fun. Yeah

NICHOLSON: And you had the regular subjects too?

SUNDSTROM: Oh yeah we had to do all of those, math and English and we had to take a year of Latin. And then they dropped that requirement. We had no typing because there was a girl's school across the archway at Cass. It was a girl's business school called Commerce. And they taught business classes there and typing but the Cass students weren't allowed to take typing. So I really never learned to type all the time I was in school. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: That's interesting.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah, and then they tore Commerce down first to make room for the...I think it's the I-75 freeway to Toledo. That's what's there now. And then ultimately they took Cass down.

NICHOLSON: How did it make you feel?

SUNDSTROM: Awful. Awful it was a beautiful Albert Kahn building. It was gorgeous. Nine stories high. Oh it was a wonderful school.

NICHOLSON: That's too bad.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah, it was too bad but you know I guess money, talks. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: What did you do for fun at that time?

SUNDSTROM: Ah, let's see. I played basketball a lot. I swam. That's right I was big into swimming. Um, I was a lifeguard at Rouge Pool, Metropolitan Beach, when it first opened. Everybody that was on the swim team did that sort of thing. And a friend and myself took the water safety instructors program. We lied about our age and said, of course we were eighteen! And so we took that and I taught water safety, you know as an adjunct to doing other things. So it was always easy to do. And years later that came into play, I was working um, in a kids psych hospital. For the state, and uh, there had been a drowning in one of the state hospitals. So the mandate came out that nobody could be in the pool unless there was a certified water safety person in there. So instead of being a nurse I was the water safety person. So it was very interesting. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: So after you graduated from Cass Tech you went on to...

SUNDSTROM: Harper Hospital.

NICHOLSON: Harper Hospital...

SUNDSTROM: School of Nursing. mmmhmmm.

NICHOLSON: Tell me about that program.

SUNDSTROM: That was good. That was called a hospital based nursing program which was very common in the day. Most big teaching hospitals had a nursing school. And they were 36 month programs and we affiliated with Wayne so we would walk up to Wayne twice a day for that first, I think it was, year. And then we only had maybe one class for a couple of semesters. And it was heavy into clinical work. So the graduates from my class were well schooled in clinical applications and it's a little different today; it's computer application. Not good [laughs]. But it was a nice program and we rotated, they really gave the students a good background. We worked a lot of afternoons and midnight shifts being you know one of the things was we staffed the hospital because there was a nursing shortage at the time. And we would have a class sometime during the shift. There was always a class at night. Either by a nurse or one of the interns. Something like that.

NICHOLSON: That's interesting.

SUNDSTROM: mmmhmmm.

NICHOLSON: And that was in 1953?

SUNDSTROM: 1953 to 56 I was there.

NICHOLSON: Okay, and do you remember any teachers, anyone memorable that you had?

SUNDSTROM: Uh, you mean at Harper?

NICHOLSON: Yeah.

SUNDSTROM: Um, one of the head nurses Bernie Dwyer, She taught clinical medicine. Head nurse. And she really made it interesting and wa—and she just made you want to learn more. She was excellent. And she still comes to our alumni dinners. She's not a Harper graduate, but she's invited.

NICHOLSON: What were your extracurricular activities when you were going there?

SUNDSTROM: You didn't have time. There was no time. You were study or working. Yeah. It was very heavy, mmmhmm. Ah, I'm trying to think. We got a month off a year, that was it.

NICHOLSON: What was the Cass Corridor like when you were going to school then?

SUNDSTROM: In high school and nursing school, you know, people would say it's pretty seedy, and it was. It was run-down, um, there were empty buildings back then. When I went to Cass, everybody that went to Cass rode the bus. And so I could take the bus up Cass or I could take a Dexter bus or a Grand River bus. And you just had to, you developed street smarts as a young person. And, when I was in nursing school, we just talked about this last night at a meeting. The area by Harper Hospital was where the Brewster Projects were. They were two or three stories I recall, and that was the Black Bottom of Detroit. And, um, what did they call it? Some kind of alley, I wrote it down. Paradise Valley that's right. And so there was a lot of Jazz in there um, night clubs and things like that. And as a student nurse at Harper, on the Brush side of the old building if you were working nights, yeah we were 18 and 19 years old so I mean to see hooker ladies, you wonder hmmm, hmmm. There was a lot of activity. So you know you—if you weren't busy, you looked out the windows because there were a lot of two story two family or four family flats as they called those buildings. Which have all been cleared now. For land reuse. But it was um, it was an area that was dark, there were lots of big trees. So the streets were not really well lit. There was a mandate out from, I think, maybe it was Wayne, maybe it was Harper, but if we were up on the Wayne campus after dark, for a class or doing whatever, we had to go down to Woodward to the 13th Precinct and the police would take us back to the residence. And that held for Harper Grace and there was another hospital but I can't remember what hospital. Maybe Highland Park General affiliated here. So they were aware of, you know, safety and they monitored us and the police were very good about it. You

know, they just knew that that was one of the things they had to do was to take the student nurses back to their residence. But we could walk downtown. You know, we stayed on Woodward, didn't take the side streets or anything like that. So um, it was a good experience. And today I would walk downtown. Wouldn't bother me, yeah.

NICHOLSON: So I know you said you were busy, but were you involved with any movements or organizations at that time?

SUNDSTROM: No, they didn't have those social movements then. No. mnn, mnn.

NICHOLSON: So when did you move out of the area?

SUNDSTROM: I graduated in '56, spent a year working in Ann Arbor, left there, moved to—back with my parents for a year—worked in kid's psych. And then I moved to San Francisco for a few years. And then came back in the '60s. But I moved back to Detroit proper, I lived at Lafayette Towers for, I think 5 years. And then an apartment for a couple of years, and then in '74 to '79 I lived in Troy. And I did not like Troy. Well I was way away from everything. There was no downtown center to it, everybody was uptight about how many times a week you washed your car, where'd you have lunch? And it just didn't, you know, it was a nice condo but it didn't, didn't make it for me so I moved back downtown to my present home.

NICHOLSON: Okay--

SUNDSTROM: Yeah.

NICHOLSON: And that was in the?

SUNDSTROM: In '79 I moved back here.

NICHOLSON: What was the area like back then?

SUNDSTROM: Ah, less than marginal. It was really iffy. But an article came out in the Sunday paper about this building that got re— was going to be rehabbed and they had, you know, they were selling the units off and so a friend of mine that taught here at Wayne, he said well lets go because you don't like this place, and I don't like this place. And I was busy that day and I didn't

have time, I said well, if you see a place, you know, that you think I might like put a deposit on it for me. Well he got down here, and nobody was there from the realty company, or whoever was managing it. And he was disappointed. He said to me now you don't have a new house. So I pursued it, he didn't. And I ended up buying down there and he never did. So, I bought my place, it was a converted low end rental apartment building. It was what I called slum—slum housing. And I bought my unit and, I restored it myself. Because I, I prefer the work I did or could do rather than what was being done in some of the other units. So I don't want to say anything bad about the developer.

NICHOLSON: And that's where you live now?

SUNDSTROM: Yep!

NICHOLSON: The house that you--?

SUNDSTROM: Yep! Same house. Yep. I've been there almost 40 years.

NICHOLSON: Wow.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah!

NICHOLSON: So, what kind of—what was going on in the neighborhood at that time?

SUNDSTROM: Um, it was heavy into hookers, drugs. Drugs were blatant. I just, you know, I knew they were here, but when some guy parked his car in front of my house one day, and whipped out his syringe. I was really [laughs] upset. But, you know, you just have to, you know—live with it. You can't say anything. Not as a single person. So, um, but it was busy that way. But there were new people moving into the area. My building has 11 units in it. And they were all really interesting people that bought into that building. So, and it continues to be that way. It was just, um. There were no places really that you could go out and eat at night. There was a Coney King which was really nice, on 2nd but they tore that down. And it was nice on Sunday morning because you'd go over there, read the paper, have your breakfast, see everybody in the neighborhood. And so when that closed, we sorta lost, you know, the neighborhoodness of the build—of the area. But now there's all kinds of cutesy little places.

NICHOLSON: What was the music scene like?

SUNDSTROM: The music scene—there was jazz, there was Cobbs Corner on the corner of Willis and Cass. It was a bar that had music. They had jazz, I don't know if they had something else in there ever or not. Then there was some kind of a music place in the middle of that building, but I just don't recall what it was. There would be—there was always—Orchestra Hall was there. Um, huh. I don't know. There, there, oh there was a jazz, um—venue up near the boulevard, it was in a converted house or something like that. I went up there a couple of times. Really nice jazz.

NICHOLSON: Was there dancing there? Or was it--?

SUNDSTROM: No, uh, no dancing there. But dancing, on the corner of Woodward and Willis, where that new Lawrence Tech Building is. That was the old Greystone Ballroom. It was a beautiful building. Oh it was gorgeous. And they had dances in there. mmmhmmm.

NICHOLSON: Did you attend any?

SUNDSTROM: No. Didn't go there when I lived there. I had been to the Greystone years before. Yeah, and then the Greystone closed and got demolished.

NICHOLSON: So, how has the—or what is the area like now? You live on 2nd?

SUNDSTROM: I live on Willis and 2nd. It's gotten very, as I say, hoity-toity. Um, the—it—the grit is gone. And so that was part of the charm of the neighborhood. But you know with the redevelopment and the infusion of money, you just could see it happening. They have high-end stores, restaurants—I'm not sure how well supported they are. It, it's not as comfortable as it used to be. But you know, that's the way it is. I'm sure this will last for a few years and it may, you know, it may not sustain itself. I don't know.

NICHOLSON: When did you start seeing the biggest change? At what point?

SUNDSTROM: Mmmm, maybe, ten years ago. When they started to restructure businesses that were in old buildings and put up—the one that comes to mind is the Auburn. That's very

high end stuff in there. And we're not a high end neighborhood so the customer base must come from the suburbs. And the Willy's put in those very expensive lofts across the street from us. And then they have an art gallery in there. The Review is in there. But Avalon Bakery now, that's a whole different ballgame. That brought a lot of people to the neighborhood and they—you know they really deliver a good product there. So that's nice. The—the new Will Leather Store, right beside our building. It will be interesting to see what their client base is there. It's very expensive. But it's nicer than the Tomboy Super Market that used to be there.

NICHOLSON: The area—you—it's more, aesthetically pleasing?

SUNDSTROM: It is aesthetically pleasing, it's cleaner. We just had a meeting last night and one of the people that lives south of me had noticed an influx of hookers. He said, "The ladies are out in the afternoon." He said, "From 1 to 5." And the police are at this meeting and so they took a little more information. How many women were out, and they attribute it to the guys working on the new hockey thing. Hockey rink, because there's money to be made there, in the afternoon.

NICHOLSON: That's interesting. That's very interesting.

SUNDSTROM: Oh yeah! [chuckles] So you see, everybody I guess benefits from it [laughs].

NICHOLSON: Yeah.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah, I thought it was funny.

NICHOLSON: So, you said you were—you're active in your neighborhood activities and programs?

SUNDSTROM: Yeah I do volunteer work for special projects at Midtown, Inc. So I ride the bus for instance on Noel Night, because people get on the bus—they don't, they know they want to go someplace but they don't know where it is or how to get there. So you know, you make nice on people. Tell them how, you know, drive—or walk down here, be careful here, keep your purse tucked in, you know. Give them a few little tips. So the Noel Night bus, is very busy and

it's a huge activity. It's really um, it brings tons of people into the neighborhood. And with the construction it's really hard.

NICHOLSON: Oh, I imagine.

SUNDSTROM: Oh, it's awful. But you know, people would say— But I want to get off the bus here, and I want to go over there. We said, mmm can't, there's a three foot ditch over there and you can't—the construction people don't want you in there. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: So do you do other—any other activities, or?

SUNDSTROM: Um, I ride my bike in the neighborhood. I talk to the Preservation Detroit Crowd when they come by our condo because they always bring people by there, because it's really a nice building. It's a lovely building. So they always, you know, bring the tour through there. I ride with a bike group and we pick out a different area to, you know, concentrate on. I bring a lot of—friends in from out of town to have lunch or whatever. Take them to Shinola or up to Motor City Brew. But, you know, just to expose the neighborhood. It's—it's really a very walkable neighborhood. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: You—you're neighborhood has an association? Or meetings or?

SUNDSTROM: We have a crime and cleanliness meeting the second Wednesday of every month. So this last night we had it, and we talked about, you know, anybody can talk about anything that's bothering them and their neighborhood. And if it's a police matter, the police attend to it. And they're very good about responding to the needs of the community. They Wayne State Police are wonderful. Without them, you know, I'd die. You—if you have an issue, if you call them, they're usually there with three cars in no time. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: How long has the group been meeting?

SUNDSTROM: Ah, it's probably twenty-five years. You know, it started as just a little fringe group of business people and residents. And it's really expanded. We take in a larger area now and, um yeah, the attendance goes up and down. People get complacent and they forget to go. But if they have an issue that's the place to, you know, air it. Because you'll get some results.

And the council people that represent our area, usually have a representative there. And you can speak directly to them, you know, get right in their face.

NICHOLSON: How instrumental do you think the group is, or was, or has been in improving the neighborhood?

SUNDSTROM: Oh it's very—it's very instrumental. Ah, the thing that is probably it's—golden hour was—they got the Willis Show Bar and Anderson's Gardens closed down. Years ago.

NICHOLSON: And what was happening there?

SUNDSTROM: It was a hooker hangout. And drugs. And they got them padlocked and out of business. And they have—they really can target a building that's you know historically, and bad. And we have a building on 2nd we call the drug building. And after probably three years, it finally got closed.

NICHOLSON: And it was directly because--?

SUNDSTROM: It goes into forfeiture. It was—directly related to drugs. Yeah, it was a factory. And um, there's another building down toward Masonic Temple that they got closed recently. And they're having difficulty with it because they keep breaking out the first floor barricades and are still using. But that will get resolved one of these days.

NICHOLSON: And these are all issues that were brought to light?

SUNDSTROM: Brought up. Yep, they were all brought up and—there are people who sort of adopt a building and keep watching it and they're in constant communication with the police. And they take pictures, uh it's very good in that respect. And last night, um, I forget who it was that was mentioning a specific incident and the duty sergeant said—we're on it, we got it!

NICHOLSON: That's nice. So it really help the sense of community?

SUNDSTROM: Oh it does! Because Detroit police come to our meeting as well as the Wayne Police. One night we had DEA there and uh, because they have people in the neighborhood all

the time. The sheriff's office every now and then they send somebody, but not as much as the others. Yep. We're heavily patrolled.

NICHOLSON: That's good.

SUNDSTROM: I love it. We're the model area. They don't want anything bad to happen.

NICHOLSON: Tell me about the North Cass Community Garden.

SUNDSTROM: Garden? Oh that was sort of fun, um. I think, it came to fruition, I want to say nine—gosh—I don't know. This is '16, maybe it was '09 that it happened? Sue Mosey said to me one day—I've known Sue for years and years. And she said to me, "What would you think. Would you like to have a garden across the street from your house?" I said, "Huh?" She—because it was a derelict gas station and three nasty lots. And she said, "Would that be of any interest to you?" I said "Oh, yeah." She said, "Do you think your neighbors would be interested?" I said, "Probably." So she says, "Well I'm going to set up a luncheon." So we had lunch at the Traffic Jam and I took the young neighbor that lives next door to me and he said "really?" I said, "Yeah. So let's go. And Kim was there, and ah. We have this meeting and she's got her, two of her staff with her that I didn't know. And so they're talking about well do you think you'll need this? Do you think you'll need that? What—what would you really want there? We said, "Well raised beds, and you know, we've got to have a fence around it. It's gotta be locked. Because everything will walk off." And ah, I said—my neighbor said to me, "Oh that's just so much pie in the sky." I said, "Probably." But I said we had nice lunch. And it came to pass. It really happened. And ah, my—one of my neighbors is a mechanical engineer and so he set up the whole building process you need: this many four by fours, they need to be this length. You know, the technical parts. And so when I came back in the spring from skiing. Ah, there was a meeting and we were going to have a work day. And we used the garage of the Willy's condo building because there was nothing in it. And the call went out from Midtown, Inc. saying we need supervisors, we need volunteers, blah blah blah. And so we'd already volunteered and cleaned up the area. And ah, gosh. The next week some big truck came in, they took out the dirt, the concrete, cleaned out the bad dirt, put in the new dirt. Did all the things you had to do for gardening and then we had this buildout so. I got to be a supervisor

because I had tools and some skills. So we worked over there and we all brought our tools and you know extension cords, plugs, you name it, and we were lucky because a bunch of us lived across the street and we could just go home and get stuff. And so the restaurants provided us lunch, um. We cut things and you know, you would get somebody that says, "Oh I don't know how to use a saw." They say, "Okay I do, here. You hold it, I'll cut." [ch, ch, wood sawing noise] and so we had, oh probably 50 or 60 people working. And everybody had a different job. And finally the lumber got pulled out to the street and it was put in specific piles and there was a way you put it together. And you got—you got a work partner. And my work partner, met me in the morning, and she introduced herself and so yeah you don't really talk, you say, hmmm "Do you know anything about building?" "No." "What do you—do you have a day job?" "Yes." "What do you do?" "Oh I work on a computer." I said, "Oh that's nice." So at the end of the day, she knew how to use a few tools. And it was just really fun. And so we built these boxes and then it just progressed from there. You know, you fill them with dirt, da da da da da. And we have this gorgeous garden now. It's beautiful.

NICHOLSON: And the community takes care of it?

SUNDSTROM: Uh you rent a spot, and you have to do community—there's four hour—you have to do four hours of community work in the garden. And there's a garden manager. And each year the garden gets a little better because we get like a---now we have grapes. We didn't have grapes before. We have raspberries and blackberries because somebody donated a bunch of plants. And we have a beautiful herb garden in the center. And that's open to everyone. And you meet people from the community because you need to—to live or work in the community to have a spot there.

NICHOLSON: People generally share what they grow there? The grapes and stuff?

SUNDSTROM: They do. Well, the grapes we don't have very many. They're just starting to come. But yeah! The berries are open to anybody to pick. And the people, we have a box that hangs on the outside of the fence, and if you have too much produce you can put it there and anybody from outside the garden can help themselves.

NICHOLSON: That's cool!

SUNDSTROM: Yeah! And most people if you have a, you know, like a ton of lettuce they'll say well here take some. And they, you know, share everything. So it's really nice and you learn how to grow different plants because some people are really good at this. Yeah, it's fun.

NICHOLSON: Who owned the lot before—when the gas station was there?

SUNDSTROM: I believe the city finally owned it, but midtown bought the property. We have water over there, we don't have power but we have water. And somehow we have a water meter. Somehow it's paid, because we all pay—I don't know, I think it's 30 dollars a season. But they provide the compost, you know, we all work on it. So it's—it's really a community effort and a lot of restaurants have—as we call them, the commercial beds. They're huge. And they use the stuff in their restaurants for salads.

NICHOLSON: So obviously, the community garden has impacted the neighborhood positively.

SUNDSTROM: Oh yeah. It is. And a lot of people from an apartment building, it's sort of low income building, they garden there. You know, and you meet other people that probably you would not have met.

NICHOLSON: That's nice.

SUNDSTROM: Yep.

NICHOLSON: So what did you love most about the Cass Corridor in the very beginning, and then in the 70's, and then now?

SUNDSTROM: Well I'd always—yeah I'd ridden the bus through there as a kid. And we had gone to school there in the neighborhood. I just like the area because the diversity of it is what's so nice. Because if you're in the suburbs you don't have people that are unemployed and homeless. And, yeah, probably everybody would have a degree and they're doing something. But, down here, you know, it doesn't matter. Yeah. They're all—like the guy who plays his drums at the bakery will walk me up the street. And he'll say, "Well it's getting dark ma'am, come on I'll walk with ya." You know?

NICHOLSON: Well that's nice.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah. So that's okay. Yeah. I like that. Yeah. But the diversity is what's neat.

NICHOLSON: And what would you say—has what you loved about it changed since you've been here, as the area's changed?

SUNDSTROM: yeah. We have fewer street people. I think we have less crime. But I'm not a person that's going to be out walking after dark by myself anyway. I might walk from Motor City back to my house because I'm walking on 2nd. But I would not be walking in the neighborhood by myself. Uh, I think that, I like the people—we still have our old standbys on the street that are street people. And that's fine. And everybody watches out—if he got hurt I would go help him. And likewise, he would come to me if somebody was bothering me. And I think people that live in the neighborhood recognize who else is from the neighborhood and you watch out for each other.

NICHOLSON: What do you miss most about the area?

SUNDSTROM: Mmmm. I---I don't, well you miss seeing more street people for one thing. But you do have more people walking now. We have an abundance of dogs now. Everybody's got a dog or two dogs. I—I guess I miss having the small little hole in the wall restaurant. We just don't have that kind of place anymore. The old Coney King was a great place. It was you know, probably the health department was all over them, but you know, it was okay.

NICHOLSON: How accessible do you feel the businesses are now?

SUNDSTROM: I think with the new parking meters they're bad. It's hard, hard, hard. There's no free parking. And I think that thwarts a lot of business. And for instance where I live you cannot park on my side of the street. And the parking people make a ton of money there on Saturday. The---we didn't have paid parking on the street and now we have those new meters, or whatever they call them—the zone. And that to me is bad for business. If the business doesn't have a parking lot, they're not going to get a lot of walk-in business.

NICHOLSON: What do you think has continued to attract residents to the area over time?

SUNDSTROM: I think just the name, The Cass Corridor, brings them in here. They want to see what it's all about. I tend to not say I live inMmidtown. If people say where do I live, I say

Detroit. And people will generally say, nobody lives in Detroit. I say, I live in the Cass Corridor. And people, older people will know what that is. A young person may not. I ski in Canada and when I crossed the border one time and the—the immigration guy said to me, “Where do you live?” I said, “Detroit.” He said the usual, “Nobody lives there.” I said, “I really do.” He says, “Where?” And I said, “I live in the Cass corridor.” “No.” I said, “I do!” So we talked about that bar and restaurant on Cass with the white things, the Circa [Lounge]. I said, “did you ever go to the Circa?” He said, “I did! I used to work on the bridge.” I said, “Oh, well then”—he said, “Then you really do live there.” I said, “Of course I do!” [laughs]. Yeah. But people don’t recognize that real people live in the Cass corridor. Yeah. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: How do you feel about the rebranding of the Cass Corridor as Midtown?

SUNDSTROM: I’m not for it. At all. But I guess it brings business in, so. And there into—people are interested in money. So that’ll do it. Where I ski, I had a birthday party. A big birthday party this summer and a number of my ski friends came down who had never been to Detroit. They were fascinated with the neighborhood. They loved it. They said: Oh you can walk here, you can go get this, and you can go get that, and you have the Eastern Market. Yeah they were just—they couldn’t believe that was in Detroit. Yeah. Because I don’t know what they thought Detroit was, but they were pleasantly surprised. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: Do you think the rebranding is going to affect the Corridor—how do you think it’s going to affect it-

SUNDSTROM: The Image?

NICHOLSON: Yeah.

SUNDSTROM: I think it’s going to—you know, it’s sort of like it is—you know, some of my friends say, oh it’s the new SOHO. So, yeah. But the die hards are always going to say I live in the Cass Corridor.

NICHOLSON: Do you think there will be a time when people won’t call it that anymore?

SUNDSTROM: Oh I'm sure. I'm sure. Probably 50 years down the pike they may not. But I think as long as people like me are alive and a lot of my neighbors are younger than I. I mean everybody's younger than I am. But um, they still call it the Corridor. And there are people that say I absolutely refuse to say I live in Midtown. So, you know. What do you do? Midtown, Inc. has brought a lot of new things and positive things to the area. So you have to give them credit for that.

NICHOLSON: The people that call it the Cass Corridor, is it because they--

SUNDSTROM: They're old school.

NICHOLSON: --they're proud of the history? Is it because that's important to them?

SUNDSTROM: Well they're proud of the history and they know what the Cass Corridor meant. And Midtown is just another new name. And they—they, if you Google Cass Corridor, we come up immediately, but I guess Midtown does too. But the Cass Corridor has a rich history, you know, it was not always a nice neighborhood. And now it's difficult for people to believe that can be a nice neighborhood. Because it is a nice neighborhood. And so I think, I think both terms will be used.

NICHOLSON: What has been the most dramatic moment for you in the Cass Corridor?

SUNDSTROM: Oh God, I don't know. A lot I guess. I have no idea because, I don't think of it in terms like that. Um, I have no clue. None.

NICHOLSON: Did you follow the art scene much in your time living here?

SUNDSTROM: Um, no. I'm not really into the art scene. But I do have a friend that is—was CCS [College for Creative Studies] so I get pulled into a few things now and then. Yeah. They had, we used to have, gosh what was it called. It was the fall—the art festival in the fall. It was on the Wayne Campus, do you remember that?

NICHOLSON: um.

SUNDSTROM: Midtown, Inc. did that. And then that stopped, a few, gosh it's a lot of years ago I guess. But it was like the Ann Arbor Art Fair only smaller. And it was a one or two day event. Yep.

NICHOLSON: What about the Dally in the Alley? Have--?

SUNDSTROM: It got so techno I can't stand that kind of music, so you know. And I found it just got to be a lot of drunks, incense, and cheap t-shirts. And I don't need that. I've got enough t-shirts.

NICHOLSON: What did it used to be like?

SUNDSTROM: Well it was sort of nice because you had, sort of local vendors. You know, people that had shop—like the vet used to have a vet clinic set up in there. I don't think she's there anymore. But there was just more, you knew everybody that was there. Now you don't know who they are—they're from Auburn Hills maybe. So um, but it's, it—I guess it's a good event for kids. I don't know. I haven't been for a couple years because it just falls at the wrong time for me. The week after Labor Day is—I'm busy.

NICHOLSON: What do you think about Wayne State's growth in the area?

SUNDSTROM: It's huge. Huge. I think it's great. When I went here the new building was the Science Building and State Hall. And 2nd Avenue went all the way up and we had WWII barracks out there, as classrooms. Because I took two classes out there. Yeah. So I think the growth of Wayne State has certainly helped the area. And it brings a lot of people to the area. I think it's, it's really, you know, getting to be a world class school. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: Can you tell me more about what it was like going to s—what campus was like when you went to school here?

SUNDSTROM: Um, Old Main was here. The Women's Gym, I remember, was up on the 3rd floor, up at the top. And they had wooden floors. Oh gosh, it was a beautiful building. We took uh, chemistry—because they had a program, it was specifically designed for the hospital based nurse programs. So we were with student nurses from other schools. And I remember,

we had to take chemistry here. Well chemistry for nurses was just awful. Because if you'd gone to Cass, you—you just closed your eyes and you could do it. So I made sure, um, one of my lab partner in chemistry was also a Cass graduate. And we just said oh this is such a waste of time. And if we had a test—so we said well we don't both need to go to lab. So one week she'd go, next week I'd go. If there was a test, you had to write two copies of the test. What can I say? It was just such a review. But that was, you know, just specific to the students that had gone to Cass, because we had had all that. And we had really, you know, good chemistry classes at Cass. So that was cool. The—I think we uh, I remember taking—um what was it called—Zoology. We had a cat that we had to dissect. And, but we'd had a really good anatomy class at Cass, so this was just sort of a review thing. Only you had cat to work with. And um, the instructor that we had was—I remember he was just very cool. And there were a couple of students that were just lagging behind. They just weren't getting the message and so it was a small enough class and he was close enough to the student that he asked—I know he asked me specifically to help somebody. And I did. I tutored them in the class. And, he really knew what each student was doing. And I don't know what it's like today, if there's so many students or if you're just a number. I have no clue.

NICHOLSON: Did you use the student center? Did they have one back then?

SUNDSTROM: They had a student center on Cass and it had a swimming pool in the basement. And it cost 10 cents to swim. And of course none of us had any money. So I would just say to the guy, this is my—my life saving—this is my swimming class. So we all got in for free.

NICHOLSON: Ah, that's cool [laughs].

SUNDSTROM: Terrible. [laughter] But you know, ten cents was a lot. Yeah. So yeah, that was—I remember that was there. And I think there was a dorm upstairs. We never went up there. We only used the pool. And then they tore it down. It was called the student Center I think. Yeah.

NICHOLSON: And what about the book store? I know that it's in a different location now than it was then?

SUNDSTROM: Uh yeah. We didn't have to deal with the bookstore because we got our books through Harper. Yeah, they had them in a pile. Yup.

NICHOLSON: That's cool.

SUNDSTROM: Yeah.

NICHOLSON: So, did I miss anything? Or is there anything that you would like to add?

SUNDSTROM: I don't think so. Um, I just think that the area has blossomed again. And you know it's—it's like a bigger area now. The Cass Corridor was sort of small before. Um, there's some positive things like I think those, those seedy hotels—that's good that they're gone. Because those were bad. I think it's cleaned up maybe a little too much. But it's okay. It'll get dirty again. Um, I would just like to see more outside places where you can sit and have coffee. I'm not into Starbucks and you know designer coffee. I just want a plain cup of coffee. And unfortunately we lost Biggby Coffee. That was a nice little place to have coffee. But I think with um, the light rail. That's going to make a big difference. Once they get the construction over with. It's wild. Yeah. But I think that the medical center has helped the area. It's certainly brought a lot more techno people into the area. And I think that thing that they're building on the north end. You know, uh tech town, up there by [unintelligible].

NICHOLSON: I think so...

SUNDSTROM: yeah I think that'll bring more techno savvy people into the area.

NICHOLSON: Was the light rail here the first—when you lived here the first time?

SUNDSTROM: There was a street car on Woodward. Because when I was in high school I used to teach swimming at Patton Pool out at Southwest and I remember I used to ride the Baker Street Car out there. And the street cars were cool. I liked those. Better than busses. Yeah and on, like the immediate area, uh, you know, we have a few new little places but I would like to see more little mom and pop shops pop up. Little places. mmhmm.

NICHOLSON: Okay. Well I guess that concludes our interview.

SUNDSTROM: Well thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT