

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Biography of Margaret Rossi

Personal Experience

MARGARET ROSSI

Interviewed

by

Richard Testa

on

July 11, 1989

MARGARET ROSSI

Mrs. Margaret Rossi was born in Warren, Ohio on December 23, 1902 the ninth of ten children. Her parents, Anthony and Lucy Flasck came to Warren in the late 1800s.

Mrs. Rossi remembers that when she was a child her parents would greet newly arrived Italian immigrants at the train depot on the end of Dana Street, where her childhood home was located. Her parents aided many of the now prominent families of Warren.

Mrs. Rossi's formal education ended when she left the eighth grade at the Elm Road School in order to help her family. In 1921 she married Nick Rossi, a teller at Second National Bank. They moved to a home on Genessee Street. Mrs. Rossi says that they were very fortunate not to have suffered badly during the Depression because all the men in the family worked pretty consistently.

In 1950 Mrs Rossi and her husband were asked to move into her parent's home in order to care for her ailing father. In 1955, Mr. Flasck died at age 93, and Mrs. Flasck died in 1960 at age 96.

Nick Rossi died in 1976 after nearly 55 years of marriage. They never had children. Mrs. Rossi still lives in her childhood home at 543 North Avenue with her brother Bill, who is 89.

T: This is an interview with Margaret Rossi for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Biography of Margaret Rossi, from 1902-1989, by Richard Testa, on 7/11/89, at 1:00 p.m.

When were you born Margaret?

R: December 23, 1902.

T: 1902. Who was President then?

R: Don't ask me. In those days I wasn't interested in politics.

T: Are you now?

R: More so than I was then, and at least I know who is President now. Those days I didn't. But as far as I can look back, I can remember. Who was the big fat one? Taft, wasn't he?

T: Yes.

R: I remember back to him, but that's as far back as I can go.

T: Okay, I'm just wondering if maybe McKinley might have been President back in 1902, or Teddy Roosevelt.

R: He was a big man too, wasn't he?

T: Yes, a very big man. Who were your parents?

R: Anthony Flasck was born 1-19-1858 and died 3-21-1951. Lucy Flasck was born 3-8-1862 and died 6-1-1955. Antonio Falasca and Lucia Falasca were my parents names prior to immigrating to the US. Antonio immigrated to the US and worked to earn money in order to marry Lucia and immigrate to the US permanently. He was single when he immigrated the first time. I am not sure whether the name changes occurred the first or the second time he immigrated.

T: And they came from Italy?

R: Yes.

T: Do you happen to know what year?

R: I'm number nine out of ten children. I was born here in Warren, so I really can't remember what year they did come. My sister Laura was born in October 18, 1885, and they immigrated the following year. So it would have to have been in 1886.

T: That would be . . .

R: In the 1800's.

T: Yes, probably with the first wave of Italian immigrants into the country than.

R: They were the third Italian family here in Warren. There were no Italians here at all, only two families. There was a Mrs. Peruficator, she was a widow I think, and a Mr. and Mrs. Albert Guarnieri, they were the two that were here, when mom and dad came. Then eventually the Italian people started coming in. And right at the end of our street -- now, we lived on Dana Avenue at the time -- there was a railroad station. The trains would come in from New York to this station, and when the Italian people would get off they would have no place to go. They wouldn't know where to go or what to do, unless they had somebody with them who knew where to go. So my mother would always know when the train would come in, so she would always check when there would be Italian people to get off. And when they had nowhere to go, my mom would bring them down to our house. We had a big eleven room home at the time. And they would come to us, and then she would give them a meal and find out where they belong and where they were going, and she and Dad would take care of them until they would find a place for them. Eventually, that's how all the Italian people got here, on the train from New York. Now that train doesn't come in there anymore and they've done away with the railroad station.

T: So most of the families that came into Warren then, came through your home?

R: Yes, a lot of the very prominent Italian people came right through my mother and dad's [house].

T: Can you give us some names?

R: Well the Guarnieri family are very well known and popular family here. I couldn't tell you all [of the names]. There were many families, but I can't remember their names.

T: What was your home like?

R: We had a great big eleven room home, and it was the drop off point for everybody that had to come to Warren on business. See, Warren was county seat, and people from Hubbard and Niles would have to come here to pay their taxes. Well they would always land at the Flasck's. My mother and dad didn't have a farm, but we were just a little bit on the out skirts of the city, and they had a cow, geese, chickens, and a big beautiful garden. Mom had an incubator, and she would raise her own chicks and chickens. Well, it was nothing for her when she would get company. She had a knack. She would send one of us girls -- not me so much because I was number nine -- to go out and kill some chickens. "How many?" we would ask. "Oh, six or seven, whatever you feel like doing out there and I'll have the water on," Mom would say. Mom would have the water on to boil so she could feather the chickens. She would boil water and we would dunk the chickens in the water, so we could pull off the feathers. The girls would go out, twist their necks and bleed them, and in no time mom would have the most delicious fried chicken on the table and everything that go with it, because we had our cow, we had all the milk and cream we wanted. We really ate good, and all the eggs we wanted, butter, cheese. We always had plenty to eat. No wonder we were so happy.

T: So it was all fresh kill?

R: All fresh kill. And the people when they would come didn't worry. There were no restaurants then, but they didn't worry about bringing a lunch. They knew they'd go to the Flasck's to eat. (LAUGHTER) They knew no one would leave without eating when they came to our house.

T: And they'd have lunch there, they'd have fresh killed chicken?

R: Always, we would have all the company, it was great. It really was.

T: That seemed like an awful lot of food to fix. I mean, how did she fix it?

R: Well, we had an awful lot of people too, don't forget. There were ten of us children. When people would come -- they wouldn't come one or two people at a time -- when it was tax time you'd probably get a whole bunch of them together and they'd take a street car and come into town. We would have at least fifteen people at a time, when they came to pay their taxes. Everyone came to Warren to pay real estate taxes. Everyone used cash, nobody wrote checks like today. You had to pay cash for everything.

T: What kind of stove did she have?

R: Well, when I was a little girl, I remember a coal stove, a wood burning stove. My mother was very modern. She loved all the new things that came out, and by hook or crook she was going to have it. So we had the first gas stove, that I can remember. She was almost faster than anybody else in town to modernize things. Anything new that came out that she needed, she got. When we did away with the oil lamps, I remember the oil lamp days. I used to get my hand in the neck of the chimneys to clean them, because my hand was small. I had to go in there and wash those chimneys, you know, that got smoked up. Then from there, when they came out with gas light, we got gas in then. That was great. All we needed to worry about was the little mantle on the top that would light up. I didn't have to wash those chimneys anymore. Next came the bathroom, hardly anybody had bathrooms then.

T: So you had an outhouse?

R: Yes, we had the outhouse, but when the bathrooms were coming in, Mom said, "That's what I want." We had just the right size room, it was like a great big kitchen, it was almost as big as these two rooms. Then we had a living room, dining room, and then we had a sitting room. On each side of this

there was a small room, probably as big as my kitchen would be.

T: What is that about a nine by ten?

R: No, smaller than that, I'd say. Anyway, it just was right for the bathroom.

T: That was a pretty good size bathroom then.

R: Yes it was. We had all the conveniences, we had the first telephone, when I was about ten or eleven years old. It was the style that hung on the wall and you had to crank it to use it. There were only three houses on our street, there were Romanian people that lived on both sides of us. Well, we had the telephone, it was a free for all "Can I use your phone?" they would all ask. We had everything that anybody wanted. We had a good life. Sunday was our big day, we never knew if we were going to have ten at our table or twenty-one. Everybody would land over at the Flasck's on Sunday, and they got their big dinner, and then we'd have fun.

T: Well, I can remember coming here as a kid.

R: Yes, all the family would spend the afternoon. My brother Joe had the piano, and if anybody was around who knew how to play it, they would sing, and we had a ball. Sunday was just like a big picnic, we really had a nice life. We had a lot of fun.

T: I have heard so much about Great-Grandma and twenty-five pregnancies. Is that exaggerated or is that correct?

R: No, not twenty-five, twenty-one. She had ten full-term live births. Ten of us lived, and the last was still born. That was eleven. Then she had ten miscarriages. So if we would all be living, there would be twenty-one of us.

T: Wow, and how many were born at home?

R: They all were. They didn't go to hospitals those days. If you had a good friend, she would come in and help you. But my mother was also a midwife, not licensed, those days you didn't need a license for anything. I wish I had a five-dollar bill

for every baby that my mother brought into this world, and I wish I had a five-dollar bill for every broken bone that she mended for anybody. She had the touch, she could tell. Now, like Bill one time, she caught Bill using his hand kind of funny, and she wanted to know what was the matter with him. Well, he finally had to admit that he fell off the bicycle and he broke his wrist. Well, he never told Mom.

T: How old was he at the time?

R: About fourteen or fifteen. Anyway, Mom took it and felt it, of course he got his licking for not telling her when he should have, and it healed wrong. She took that arm and broke it over again, and set it where it belonged, and he had no problem.

T: She broke it? Ow!

R: She broke that arm over again, well just like a doctor would do, but they'd put you under anesthetic those days, but she didn't. And it started to heal, and she broke that bone over again with her hands. She had the touch.

T: That had to be painful.

R: Sure, you think he cried for nothing. Then as she [my mother] grew older, she fell in the bathroom, and broke both of her arms, and she lost that touch, she couldn't feel anymore. She was in her late eighties then. But anybody that had any sickness -- she was like your Grandma Laura. Everybody would go to her. Well, that's the way with Mom, they would come to Mamma. This was wrong or that was wrong. If they had a baby that had pneumonia, Mom would say go to the drugstore and get some antihistamine. The mom would doctor that kid up and put that paste all over their chest and back, the next morning they were better. Old Dr. Ward used to call my mother when he needed help with patients, either to have a baby or anything.

T: Do you remember the names of the ten kids?

R: Yes.

T: Who was the oldest?



R: Your Grandma Laura was the oldest, then Uncle Joe, John, Mary, Annie, Alice, me, Olive, Bill and Vera.

T: So there are four still living?

R: Five. Five gone and five still living.

T: There's yourself, Uncle Bill, Aunt Vera . . .

R: Aunt Olive and Aunt Alice. Now Alice is ninety-three. She'll be ninety-four in September. Olive will be ninety-two, and Bill will be eighty-nine, I will be eighty-seven, and Vera is eighty-four.

T: So she is the youngster of the crowd?

R: Vera is the youngest. She's the baby.

T: At eighty-four, that's amazing.

R: Yes.

T: In fact, if my grandmother were living she'd be pushing pretty close to a hundred right now.

R: Sure she would be. Well, she'd be more than a hundred, because Aunt Mary was the third one down, and she was ninety-three when she died three or four years ago.

T: What do you think contributes to your longevity, I mean great-grandpa died at ninety-six . . .

R: At ninety-three and grandma was ninety-three.

T: What do you think contributes to that longevity?

R: I don't know. My brother Joe, was sixty-two when he died. John might have been in his late seventies --but the girls-- Annie was seventy-eight. I can't remember exactly. Mary was ninety-three when she died.

T: I'm an only child. What is it like growing up with ten kids?

R: A lot of fun. We had our fights, but it was fun. One thing about our family to this day, you can tell each other off, you could get doggone mad at them, but you'll tell them how you feel and then its done and over with, and it's never brought up again. I can't remember one person in our family that ever carried a grudge.

T: You just keep loving each other.

R: Well, there was so much love in our family that we had no time to be mad at each other. My sister Mary, she was the one we always called the screwball, because she was always full of fun. She could see a joke in anything. She didn't believe in being long faced about anything, no matter what happened she made the best of it. She said to me one day -- I don't remember whether it was me or one in the family that got mad at the other for some reason or other, you know it doesn't take much when you're growing up -- she said to me, "Don't ever stay mad at anybody, because you know you're going to eventually make up anyway, so why bother staying mad. Just make up right off the bat and be done." She was so right. And we have said that over and over and over, "Do you remember when Mary would say that?" She was right.

T: Why prolong the . . .

R: One thing about our family, Mom never had to worry about us because we never went out dating like they do today. We all got married without any dates. It wasn't like when you kids were growing up.

T: Really?

R: No, our custom was -- the strict mother and father we had, and to this day we're glad for it now -- if a man knew that he wanted to be married, he would get a friend and say, "Do you know where there's a nice girl that I could get interested in?" He'd say, "Yes, I know so and so has a nice daughter." It happened to me. The first thing you know, on a Sunday afternoon this guy would come along to visit my family, but it wasn't the family he was visiting, he was coming to check me out. So, he would say to my mom and dad if he was interested,

"I'm interested in your daughter, how do you feel about her marrying me?" Mom would say, "It's up to them, I make no choice for my daughters." Well, then when she'd ask me, I'd say, "No, nothing doing, I'm not interested and that was it." But when the right one came along that was it; "Yes Mom, I think he's pretty nice."

T: That was Uncle Nick?

R: Yes, and that was the way with everyone of us. We never dated, never went out. First of all, my mom and dad were too strict for that, and we all made good choices, from your grandmother Laura down.

T: Grandma Laura was married sixty-six years?

R: I don't remember how many years, but it's every bit of that.

T: You and Uncle Nick were well over fifty.

R: Well, when Nick died, if he would of lived one week longer it would have been fifty-five years. Everybody but Vera, Annie, and Alice didn't get to celebrate their fiftieth. Their husbands died younger. We all made good choices. By the way, have you noticed how much Pope John Paul looks like your -- you don't remember your Grandpa Testa do you?

T: Yes, I do.

R: Well have you ever noticed how he looks like your grandpa?

T: Now that you mentioned it, your right.

R: He is the spitting image of him.

T: I never thought of it.

R: When he looks at you with that smile and those eyes, he's Grandpa Testa all over again.

T: I never thought of it, your right.

R: I never think of anybody but Uncle Ross Testa, when I see him.

T: You are right, absolutely right.

R: You watch him the next time and you see if he isn't identically like him, he's built like him and everything.

T: So the marriages weren't prearranged though?

R: No. Mom never did that. It was always left up to us.

T: You never dated?

R: Nope.

T: You mean they visited you at the home?

R: They would come to the house and visit, and if they liked us maybe they'd come back, and if they didn't you would never see them anymore, that's all. But nine times out of ten, they would pretty well know whether you had a use for them or not.

T: So, how soon after you met this person might you get married?

R: With Nick?

T: Yes.

R: After I met him, well, he did the talking. I remember one day I was coming out of the garden, and I had a bucket with me. I had picked peppers. He had a little grocery store, he worked at the bank, but he started this business up for something for his father to do. Anyway, he saw me coming up out of the garden, and he went back to his father and said, "Hey, I saw a girl that I like," and he said, "Who was it?" "Over at the Flascks there was a young girl that came up out of the garden and she looked pretty nice to me." He said, "But she's engaged, she's got a fellow." So that was a disappointment. So, he told his brother-in-law this, and he said "I've heard she is and she isn't engaged." So that guy said, "Let me take the next grocery order over there." This is the way things were done those days. So he came over--well he knew my mother, in fact of the matter--he used to board with your Grandma Laura when he came from Italy, so he knew our family. He

started to ask my mother for information, and he asked my mother, "I hear Margaret's getting married." Mamma says, "What, no way!" Well he says, "I heard that this Patsy is going to marry her." Mamma said, "Maybe he thinks so, but I haven't heard that from Margaret yet." Well this guy Patsy -- I could not get rid of him -- he would come over and let on he was visiting the family. He gave everybody the impression, "Stay away from her because I'm going to get her." That's the way they did those days. [He visited] until one day I asked him if he didn't have a home of his own. I was nasty because I got sick of having him hang around, and I finally told him I was sick of him.

T: How old were you at the time?

R: Sixteen.

T: And you told this guy to pack his bags?

R: I told Patsy to pack his bags, to go home and stay there, that I was tired of him hanging around here. So any way, Mom said, "No, she isn't going with anybody, she has nobody," and he said, "Good." So, he came over the house one Saturday when nobody was home, only me and my little niece Lucy. We raised her after her mother died. So he proposed to me and I told him yes.

T: At sixteen?

R: At sixteen.

T: Now, the thing is that my grandmother was married at thirteen.

R: Well, she was about thirteen or fourteen, about fourteen probably.

T: Good Lord.

R: Yes. So I didn't have to tell my mother that I had said yes to Nick, because that little rascal Lucy, as soon as Mom came in the door she says, "Guess what? Nick was here and he took a hold of Margaret's hand, and she said yes to something."

T: She didn't know what, but she knew you said yes.

R: So that's how the cat got out of the bag. But anyway, then Nick said he was not ready to be married right away, at least for a year and a half. Well, that suited me fine, that suited Mom fine. So in a year and a half I was married. I had one of the best men you could ever get, he was a wonderful man. The courtship was all at our house. We were never alone. The courtship was a family affair. Nick would come to the house to visit and dinner with the family. He would go to church with me and my family. We never held hands and we never kissed before we were married. Those things weren't allowed.

T: How about schooling? What kind of schooling did you have and where did you go to school?

R: I went to Elm Road here in Warren, and I went to the eighth grade because in those days you didn't have to go to high school if you didn't want to. I was needed at home because Mom and Dad needed a lot of help, so I had to quit school.

T: So you were one of the "Merry Maids from the Elm Street school." Is that the way the song went?

R: I don't know, I never heard of that song.

T: I've heard the story told.

R: Bill and I and Vera went to Elm Road. Now this year it's not going to be there anymore. I wonder what they're going to do with the building?

T: It's still there?

R: The building is there, but school is done now, they're closing it.

T: Do you remember anything you studied, the subjects that they had up there?

R: I know I hated arithmetic and history, so in the long run, I didn't get too much education. I used to love English and spelling, and I loved music. In fact of the matter, my

seventh grade teacher wanted to come home with me one night after school, to ask Mom if I couldn't take singing lessons, because when they'd have singing they'd say let Margaret sing. I would have to get up in front of the class and sing, and mostly Santa Lucia. That's about as far as that goes, that's the end of my education.

T: I'm really surprised about that.

R: What did you think, I was a smarty?

T: I knew you were a smarty, I'm just surprised to find that your formal education stopped at eighth grade.

R: Well, those days you didn't have to go to school. If your Mom needed [you] home, you stayed home and helped. There weren't too many people that got a high school education those days.

T: That would of been 1915, 1916, around there?

R: Probably 1913 or 1914.

T: Did you work anywhere?

R: Yes. I went to work at the age of fourteen. I worked at the Ohio Lamp Work for about three weeks and got fired, now is that good on your tape? (LAUGHTER)

T: Yes, that's fine. What happened? (LAUGHTER)

R: Well, I just hated that work so bad, and I was working with about a five hundred watt bulb right over my forehead. That's where I got my first migraine headache, I was violently ill every time I'd go into that shop. So, I just thought I'm going to give up this job in a big hurry, so I worked it out until I got fired. I lived in the rest-room, I was not going to sit there under that big light, so I got fired. That's the last of my working out, but it taught me the best lesson, after I was married about eight years and I didn't have enough work to do at home, and I thought, "Doggone I'm going to get a job." So, I went downtown, and we had this great big hat store, Pumpkin's Hat Shop. I loved hats. So I was looking in the window and this woman came out. Her name was Van Teslaar.

She never even knew me, never even talked to me, but she took to me like a duck to water. She said to me, "Are you looking for work?" and I said, "No ma'am I not, I'm just looking at your hats." Well she says, "Why don't you come in and try some of the hats on and give me your name and address, maybe we could use you when it comes Easter time." I said, "Well, I've never sold anything in my life." She said, "You never mind, if you want the job it's yours." I said, "Okay." She was just like a sister to me, practically lived at my house after that. In fact of the matter, she was Protestant, and had this one son named Stanley, and it ended up that she was converted, I stood for her when she was converted. Billy and I stood for her son when he was converted. He had four children, and my husband and I stood for all four of those children.

T: You're God Parents to all those kids.

R: God Parents. And to this day, they're living in California and I still see them. She died, but they are a wonderful family.

T: So, World War I came along while you were a child?

R: Well, I was about fourteen then, and the railroad was way at the end of our lot. We lived on Dana Avenue and we had a great big lot that ran clear back to the tracks, from Dana to the end of the tracks. These trains with the troops, when they were leaving for overseas, would have to come through the railroad track behind our lot. So, when we knew they were coming in we would run down -- and for some reason whether it was for that very purpose or what, I don't know--they would stop there a while, or maybe they were waiting so they could switch their tracks. Anyway, we would run down there and greet these boys and bid them good-bye. How long did that war last, I don't remember?

T: 1919.

R: About three years. Well anyway, I can remember to this day, one fellah snuck a note out of the window on the train and motioned for me to pick it up. I did and it was his mother's name and address. He wrote on there, "Tell mother where I



am", and I did. I wrote to her and I told her that I had seen her son on his way on the train.

T: Did you ever hear from her?

R: No, I never did. I suppose the poor soul was too broken hearted.

T: That had to be touching though?

R: It really was. That old home was bought supposedly from this real estate man, Tom Boyle. Well, that man bought the home sometime after World War II, like he told Mom he did, but he didn't. It was at Packard at that time. Packard Electric had bought it. Then we found out that he bought the home, so that he could sell it to Packard. He knew that they were coming into town.

T: He had a little inside information.

R: He actually cheated my mother and dad, but Mom said she didn't care, all she wanted was to be completely out of debt, and come out with a home, and this is the home we bought.

T: This home was moved.

R: Not then, this home was originally on Bank Street and was moved when Packard bought all that property of ours for a parking lot.

T: Well, where was this house originally then?

R: On Bank Street, right there where the Packard Electric office are now.

T: So how long have you lived in the house?

R: Who, me?

T: Yes.

R: Well, since I was fourteen. I haven't lived here all this time. After I was married, I lived in Austintown for ten

years. I moved over on to Genessee, but my mother and father lived in this house since 1919 or 1920 at the most. I was married in 1921 and we were living here. So how many years would that be, a long time?

T: Then they moved here when Packard expanded?

R: Then, my husband and I lived over on Genessee, we built a home there. My sister Vera lived at home, but her family outgrew the house, so somebody had to go in and look after my mom and dad because they were getting old and they had Bill. So, somebody had to come in and make a home of them, so my husband and I were chosen because we had no children. So we were the two that were elected to come home and take care of mom and dad and Bill. Then in 1950, General Motors' realtor came over to see my mom and I wasn't home. When I came home mom was all shook up. She said, "There was a man here from General Motors, and he wants to buy the house for the company." And I said, "Well, we can't sell this house with Pop," Pop had his stroke then and he was bedfast. So I said, "We can't sell." She said, "He's coming back tonight, I told him to come when Nick was home and he could talk to him," and mom said, "On top of it all, I invited him for dinner tonight." Leave it to grandma. (LAUGHTER)

T: You didn't have to go out into the backyard and kill a chicken did you?

R: I didn't have to go out and kill a chicken, but I had to mix homemade noodles, because she promised him homemade noodles, and I had to hurry up. I was really mad about it, because I was tired and I had been running up and down the steps, taking care of dad and it was a last minute notice. Anyway, I got through it by hook or crook, and this man just fell in absolutely love with my mom and dad. Of course he didn't get to know Dad, because Pop was out of it because of the stroke. But my Mom -- do you want shut that tape off until I find this. (TAPE OFF) It was more money than anybody on the street [got] for this home, because he knew that Dad had to be moved, being that he was in a bad way with that stroke, and on account of Mom and Dad being old and we'd have to move. So he went overboard, but anyway, it took every penny to move the house from Bank Street here. We had to pay to move all the

electric wires and cross the tracks, every bit of that you had to pay, and it took every penny. All that was left was about three hundred and some dollars, and that had to go for the roof because when they moved it down here it hit a tree and put a hole in the roof. So it took every penny that they gave us, but we were better off because we remodeled the home when we set it down there.

T: How far was it from Bank Street to here?

R: About a mile, but you had twists and turns. You had to make one turn, and then another turn, and then we had to cut all the branches and the limbs from the trees that might of interfered, then we had to cross the big railroad down at the corner of Park and this street. Then they had to cross another railroad right here, they didn't have to cut any wires or anything, but it still cost us two hundred dollars just to be able to cross over that street. Then we had to have a new cellar built, but anyway, he did better to us than he did anybody else on the street.

T: Now Uncle Nick was working at the bank at this time?

R: Yes.

T: He eventually became vice-president of the bank?

R: Assistant cashier. If it was today, he would have been a president by this time, because they're moving them so fast know with these banks here and banks there.

T: Branches.

R: Every corner almost anymore. Still I doubt whether he would of taken it. He was in line. He could of had a branch and he didn't want it. He said he didn't want the responsibility. Enough was enough, he just wanted to be a plain banker.

T: How long did he have that job?

R: Forty-eight years.

T: Wow, that's amazing. People today in thirty years, want to be

done.

R: Today yes, but in those days. Remember when World War II came? I wanted him out of there because he almost cracked up. They were sending him help from the high school. They made him manager of the bookkeeping department. They wanted to see him progress, but he didn't want to go that fast, he just loved the people and he would rather work at that window. But anyway, when they put him in charge of the bookkeeping department, they had to get help from the high school. These kids would come from high school over to them, and they would not know how to read, let alone write. They did not even know how to add. He said they were driving him up a tree, so he almost cracked up, and they had to take him off of it. He said, "Give me back my window," and that was it. Today, they have so many of these branches, and they're moving them so fast, that they become a president in no time.

T: Or bank manager or what ever. So the first Packard was built here, then where?

R: The first Packard was built here, but I can't tell you where.

T: But they didn't build them here afterwards?

R: No. Where did they go after here? I suppose Detroit.

T: So, they did go to Detroit. I was always under the impression that the Packards were built here in Warren.

R: The first one was built here, then they went to Detroit.

T: They shipped out to Detroit. So then Packard Electric remained here though?

R: Yes, that's right, Packard Electric.

T: You say that the Depression didn't affect your family that much then?

R: No. We had to economize, but none of our men were out of work. There was something coming in all of the time. Now, like I said with my husband, the bank still continued on, they

took a big cut, but it was worth it because they kept their jobs. At Heltzel Steel, my brother Bill told me that he gave men work, either sweeping or cutting up scrap, or anything just to keep them working. All of our men kept working, none of them were out of work during the Depression.

T: How about the Halsey-Taylor Company?

R: Well, that just left here not too many years ago. They finally ended up here at the corner of our street.

T: So they were located right across the street from your old home?

R: Yes. We were on Dana Avenue. Everything happened right there.

T: Was that like one of the main streets in Warren at the time?

R: Not necessarily. Park Avenue would have been the main street then, and Atlantic Street. No. We were only about a two block street at the time, but we were on the edge where the factories begin coming in.

T: I imagine Warren has changed a great deal?

R: A lot. They have closed a lot of our plants and factories. Things have really gotten bad. The General Motors has killed a lot of the work for people, because these little shops can't keep up with them. They are giving too much, we want this, we want that, we want the other. These little plants can't afford it, they can't keep up. Well, they had to close, they had to shut down.

T: How big a town was Warren when you were in your teens?

R: Not very big. I can't tell you what the population was, but it wasn't very big. Well, it was a mile from our house to downtown, and that was the end of the line.

T: That was it.

R: That was it. They had a mile that way and a mile this way and

a mile that way. Then it gradually began spreading out. And now, oh my gosh, look where it has reached, but we're are losing our people.

T: People are moving out?

R: Yes, they have to move if they want jobs. There is nothing here for them with all these plants closing. Those that could get jobs won't work for minimum wage, because they can't live on it.

T: What were some of the organizations that you have been involved in?

R: Only the church organizations really. Like for instance, I did belong to the church choir up until a year ago. Then suddenly, I went from high soprano to almost a bass, so I gave up the choir. (LAUGHTER) That hurt, because we were just like a family. Vera and I both belonged, and we just loved it. I belonged to another group, the LCBA [Ladies' Christian Benevolent Association]. I belong to a card club. That's about all I do anymore, nothing else but sit and play cards. We would get our groups together, and we would play cards anytime we had time off.

T: One more thing. The way I figure it, you have lived through sixteen presidents. This is where we kind of started our conversation, but you lived through sixteen presidents. Off hand, who would you say was the best, and who was the worst? (LAUGHTER)

R: Don't ask me that, because like I said I wasn't for politics too much then. If you asked me how many, I can't remember. Would you want to say Reagan was the best President? (LAUGHTER) I voted for him, but now I am afraid to tell most everybody that I did. I can remember Wilson, I can remember Taft, and I can remember Roosevelt, the heavy one.

T: Teddy.

R: And the other Roosevelt.

T: F.D.R.

R: I can remember Truman, and I can't remember McKinley.

T: I think he died in 1901, I think he was shot in 1901.

R: I remember Harding, did I say Truman?

T: Yes.

R: Ford.

T: Hoover was in there.

R: Yes, there's Hoover. Well, Hoover was in right after I was married. He must of come in about 1922 or 1924.

T: Yes, right around 1924, I believe.

R: Who beat him out? Roosevelt?

T: Roosevelt beat him in 1928, no, Roosevelt beat him in 1932. Roosevelt beat Hoover out in 1932, because Roosevelt was elected in 1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944.

R: Well now, let's go back then. Who was before Hoover?

T: Either Harding or Coolidge, I think it was Coolidge.

R: Coolidge, I remember him. Well now, see I was married just about that time.

T: So you think Reagan was the best president you know?

R: I thought he was going to be, but I did get a little disappointed in him towards the end.

T: Who would you say was the worst?

R: I would not know who was the worst. I really don't know, I couldn't tell you. As far as I'm concerned, I don't think any of them are any prize. (Laughter)

T: You don't think we elect the best and the brightest?

R: Now I think we do. I'm all for Bush. I was for Bush. I really feel he's an honest man, unless he was in on that Contra Affair, I don't know.

T: He's never going to tell.

R: No, but I'll tell you what, I would say that North deserves to be pardoned, because I think he is hiding and covering up for someone else.

T: Yes, he's a fall guy, that's the way I feel too.

R: That's what I feel, and I don't think he should have to go to jail. Now, what's his name? Metzenbaum, is raising holy heck and he thinks he should of gotten a jail term. Well he better look out, they might look up some dirt on him too, because from what I can see, I don't think there's a straight one going anymore, is there?

T: That's scary, it is scary.

R: It is scary, you bet your life it is.

T: I think we're going to conclude the interview, and I would like to thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW