Historical Collections, Bridgeport Public Library
Oral History Project: "Bridgeport Working: Voices from the 20th Century"
Marjorie (Marge) Schneider (MS) interviewed by Mary Witkowski (I), November 12, 1997.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Growing Up

Section 2: Working in Bridgeport

Section 3: Husband and Home

Section 4: Art Interests and the Sculptor Phillip Pavia

Section 5: Involvement with the YWCA

Historical Collections, Bridgeport Public Library
Oral History Project: "Bridgeport Working: Voices from the 20th Century"
Marjorie (Marge) Schneider (MS) interviewed by Mary Witkowski (I), November 12, 1997.

Section 1: Growing Up

I Could you give me your full name?

MS Yes. My name is Marjorie Nordstrom Schneider.

I Nordstrom?

MS Svenska

I Is Nordstrom your maiden name?

MS Yes, my maiden name.

I Well, that brings me to your childhood. Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood? Where did you grow up?

MS I grew up in Bridgeport, until I was married in 1948.

I What year were you born?

MS 1921. When I was six years old, we moved into Barnum Avenue, a house that my grandfather had bought, in the days of P.T. Barnum. I don't know when P.T. Barnum was active in the City of Bridgeport.

I He died in 1891, so --

MS So this would have been beyond that time.

I Yes. When was your grandfather --?

MS I can't remember what the date was, but primarily, he bought this house, which was between Central Avenue and Seaview Avenue, because this would have been -- this house would have been on the outskirts of the center of Bridgeport. If you go back to the East Side today, you will still see Washington Park.

I Is the house still there?

MS No. Lacy's Manufacturing -- it was the old YWCA building -- and Lacy bought up that whole side, and then he tore down the buildings on the other side, which needed to be torn down. They were all very dilapidated, and he's building more of his own buildings

there, which is going to dress up that part of the neighborhood. Which, again, is a very good sign. But Washington Park had the first synagogue in Bridgeport and three Protestant churches - the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Church.

I Which church did you go to?

MS I went to Summerfield Methodist Church, which was up on Ridgefield Avenue. But the point I'm trying to make is that that was to be considered the center of Bridgeport, so that many of the leading people -- manufacturers and bankers -- came from the East Side of Bridgeport -- their families, a generation or so back. But then when the bridge was put across -- I think it's the Housatonic River -- the bridge brought a traffic light up to what would be Congress Street --

I The downtown area.

MS The downtown area. And then, of course, that was built up, which meant that -- well, P.T. Barnum lived on the East Side of Bridgeport, a block or two away from Washington Park.

I No.

MS I thought he lived in that area.

I No. That's a legend that he did.

MS Oh, is that right?

I Yes. He never lived there -- no. He actually lived mostly on the South End of Bridgeport.

MS Then that was Iranistan across from Klein Memorial [auditorium].

I he probably just said that so that people would buy homes there. [laughs]

MS Well, they probably did. [laughs] I have always said that I have been so grateful to live in that Barnum Avenue area because it was an ethnic neighborhood, and so there were families of -- well, let's see. We had Polish and English and Irish and Jewish, Ukrainians. All first generation, I would say, with grandmothers and grandfathers living either with them or they living, as we did, with my grandmother. I think that, as I think back of the leisure time, you sat on the porch. And any of the neighbors that went by

would walk up from the porch and sit down and have a conversation -- a short one -- five or ten minutes. But it was a very good camaraderie kind of neighborhood.

I What street were you on?

MS Barnum Avenue.

I Oh, right on Barnum Avenue?

MS …right on Barnum Avenue. And again, the interesting part as you think back now, they had on the corner -- there were two floors. This would be Barnum and Central. And the bus would stop at the corner -- the five cent bus. It would go from the Stratford/Bridgeport town line to the West End of Bridgeport for five cents. And we had the ten cent bus, which was the one that would go from Milford to Southport or to Westport. But no one took that unless it rained, and you couldn't get on the five cent bus. But the two floors that were on the corner, so that as people got off the bus, they would stop and buy flowers. The hospitals didn't have flowers in those days, and they would walk up one block or two blocks, to Bridgeport Hospital.

I Oh!

MS You had a drug store, you had a hardware store, you had -- down at the end of the block, by Seaview Avenue -- you had a barber and a butcher market -- a fine butcher market. My grandmother's sister owned and worked there. She cut the meats and everything else. They had a dry goods store. So that you didn't have to leave the block. I mean, everything was there that you needed. They had stores -- three or six stores underneath, and two floors of housing. Which, again, they're trying to bring back today. It was a very easy neighborhood to get along with other people and other nationalities. Which, as I said earlier, held anybody in good stead because today -- everybody strives for that, and it's very difficult to find.

I It is.

MS If you grow up in the suburbs, everybody seems to be the same kind of people.

I Everybody has alarms on their houses.

MS That's right. Which, in those days, your doors were open.

I Yes.

MS I went to [Warren] Harding High School, and I became active in the YWCA when I was a sophomore in high school.

I Oh!

MS Because in those days, the only sports programs were for boys in high schools. And it was a two session Warren Harding High School. Sophomore and freshmen went from 7:30 in the morning until 12:00 and juniors and seniors went from 12:30 until 5:00. Nobody thought anything of it. I graduated in a class of five hundred.

I Because there were so many students, they had two shifts of people?

MS Correct.

I Wow.

MS In Harding High School. They had Central High School and Congress High School, up on a Congress Street.

I And Central High School, at that time, was on Lion's Terrace.

MS That's right.

I Which is now City Hall.

MS That's right. From the standpoint of the class itself, we didn't know the caliber of teachers that they had until they died and you saw that most of them were ivy league Seven Sisters, not that that means anything. But their background was a lot different than from a community college, if we can use that as an example.

I Right.

MS And that there was no question if you wanted to go to Yale or Harvard or Cornell -- you could go. And, of course, they didn't have the state universities -- New Haven, Waterbury. They didn't exist. They had Storrs, which was an agricultural college in those days. And unless you worked on a farm, you didn't go to the University of Connecticut. But the YWCA was great because we -- a bunch -- I say a bunch of girls -- maybe a half a dozen of us went in and said that the high school offers the girls nothing. Would we be able to come in and play basketball. And they opened their arms and said, "Bring your friends in." We brought a hundred people in.

I Wow.

MS We formed a club, and they --

I What year would that have been around?

MS 1935. And it continued on, and they had a Central High School girls club, and a Bassick High School Girls Club. Now, people walked to high school in those days. I mean, they could walk from Stratford Avenue, Newfield Avenue, to Harding High School. They could walk from Kossuth Street to Harding High School. The only people that were bussed were people from Nichols. And the people from Trumbull went to Bassick High School. So that, there was never any money in the City of Bridgeport. This is in the days of McLevy.

I You went to Central High School?

MS No, I went to Harding High School.

I Oh, I'm sorry.

MS Which is just up the street.

I Right.

MS That really takes care of the earlier years.

I Can we kind of back up a little bit. What did your father do?

MS My father was a sign painter. Or, today, they would call him a graphic artist. He did the G.E. poster cards for their shows. He would do the emblems for what was garages -- blue ribbon garages – that sold Dodge and Plymouth cars. And in those days, when you bought a car, you'd have an emblem put on the side door, and he would do that kind of work.

I Oh, my.

MS Yes. My mother didn't work. But we moved into Barnum Avenue because my two uncles had died, and my grandfather had died. So that -- my father was a wonderful man. I mean, here he was with six women. [laughs] My two aunts, my grandmother, my cousin and my mother and I.

I And you were the only child?

MS Yes. But I grew up with my cousins and a lot of people in a house that apparently was larger than anybody ever thought -- that could house all these people with bedrooms. But

it was a different era. Of course, these were the early days, thinking now of the late 1920s. You're talking know about the Depression years. But none of us -- the whole neighborhood -- none of us ever thought that --

I Never affected?

MS No. Somebody said years later: "You know, we lived on peanut butter for breakfast, lunch and dinner. But we liked it!"

I [laughs]

MS [laughs] and I'd laugh afterwards because it was true.

I Yes.

MS And then, of course, when the war came, they had rationing.

I World War I?…no II, excuse me.

MS No World War II. My father was in World War I.

I Yes.

MS If you talk about the early years, which were earlier than I came on the scene -- for the first World War, you had in this block -- five blocks in this area -- you had Singer Sewing Machine, you had Remington Arms, you had General Electric, and, of course, they all did their own thing in production work of whatever their specialty was. But when World War I came, they turned right over into war work. And then when World War II came, all the companies just --

I Did it again.

MS Yes. And, of course, that's where women came into -- in both cases. My mother had said she worked at General Electric during the First World War.

I Oh, she did? So she did work at one point.

MS My father was drafted and he was in France for two years.

I What was the heritage of both sides -- backgrounds?

MS My mother was of German descent, and my father was of Swedish descent.

I Did they come here from there?

MS No, they were all born in Bridgeport Hospital.

I Oh, okay.

MS but my grandmothers on both sides met their husbands in churches, which, I suppose, still happens today, if you're coming over from a country.

I Yes.

MS My grandmother had three sisters, and one sister lived down on the same block, and started the market -- all marble floors. Amazing brass fixtures and brass --

I And this was where?

MS This was on Barnum Avenue, between Central and Seaview Avenue.

I Okay. [laughs]

MS And they had horse and carriages. This is going back. But the point is that they gravitated together. They wanted their freedom. They didn't want to live on top of each other. They were far enough away that they could walk to each other's house. And my grandmother's other sister lived in Stratford -- California Street -- things come back. Every Saturday night, they would get together for supper, and they talked German. My grandmother went to the German-American Church on Grant Street -- Methodist Church. So that some things gave them great pleasure, which we seem to have gotten away from. We want it. We long for it. But it's hard to find with the jobs that people are doing today and need to do it for economic reasons, I would say. But I think that the war years -- I'm moving ahead. I don't know whether you want to move ahead this fast.

I Well, when you left high school -- you were how old? Seventeen or eighteen?

MS I was eighteen, and I worked for a year at the United Illuminating Company.

I And you were still living at home?

MS Yes. There was no other way you could do it. And, of course, the housing wasn't what it is today. I mean, there weren't that many houses around. Most people in the block owned their house where I lived. There were rentals, but families lived together more than they do today. What was your question, earlier?

I Where you graduated from high school.

MS I worked the year and then I went back to junior college, which was on Fairfield Avenue -- two houses they were. It's a forerunner of the University of Bridgeport.

I Okay.

MS They were across from Klein Memorial, and great instructors, great professors.

I What was your focus at the junior college?

MS Social work I was interested in.

I Oh. And what year would you have graduated in?

MS This would have been 1940 to 1942. I'm trying to think of the dates now. I graduated in 1938. In 1939, I was very fortunate. The YWCA sent me -- as a delegate to the First Conference of Christian Youth in Amsterdam, Holland.

I Oh, my goodness!

MS And, for the first time, it was a Christian Youth Conference -- eighteen to thirty-five years old. But it was the first time that they included the YMCA and the YWCA and attendants, because we were not real church people. They didn't know whether we were church people when we were selected, I guess, you'd have to say. But the National Board picked twenty-five women from across the country who were either volunteers or who had potential, I guess. And I was the youngest at eighteen, which is pretty good.

I Yes.

MS I had great experience, and I'm sure it changed my life. Certainly that led me into the YWCA, and because of this experience, I gave them -- I don't know -- thirty or forty years of volunteer work

I Wow.

MS And that's why we got working hard -- Ann Martz and I -- on the history of the YWCA -- the centennial year. But then after I graduated from the junior college, it was 1942, so the War -- well, war was declared what in December of 1941, so if we move ahead six months, industry didn't even have time to retool, really, for whatever their job was going to be for the government, really. Do you want to go into my work stand in 1942?

I Sure. That's great. Unless you want to talk a little bit first about your trip to Holland -- that sounds fascinating.

MS Well, that was an experience.

I How long were you there?

MS It was for the summer of 1939. My family were great people because I didn't know until

I came home that they were very concerned because the winds of war --

I I was just going to ask you that. Yes.

MS They were very concerned, because the winds of war --they knew, but what did I know? I mean --

I So you left in --

MS I left in July.

I July of 1939?

MS Yes. The conference was for ten days, and then we went to kind of a retreat or a camping area called Woudchoten, in Holland -- just the YWCA delegation -- to digest and talk about what had gone on at the conference, which was heavy stuff. I mean, the speakers were people like Reinhold Neibuhr and --

I Oh, my!

MS And T.Z. [T---]. Theologians from all over the world. There were, I think, fifty-seven countries. When I came home and I said fifty-seven countries, you had to go to an atlas to find out if there were fifty-seven countries.

I [laughs]

MS But the African countries and the Middle East and the Far East -- we slept in hostels -- the women did -- in hostels, five stories high, and you had a trough that looked like where the cows would get their water from -- that's where you brushed your teeth and you washed your face. It was a different way of living, and we were able -- we rented bicycles to get ourselves around. But the experience of the lectures, which, I have to say -- well, it was economics and the Christian life. It would be people getting along -- how do you work towards unification of Europe and the world? It was ahead of their time, really. But then, when we left, after we had ten days and another seven or eight days of this Woudchoten camp for the YWCA people -- we all could do what we wanted to do. But it was decided before we left here in National Board on Lexington Avenue, made all the arrangements. I mean, I'd lie if I told you how much the trip cost, but we went over on the SS Statendam then, which was blown up by the Germans in Rotterdam during the invasion of Holland and Belgium, and I think the ship took probably six days to get over.

After the conference, we could do what we wanted to do. Some people went to -- well, they went all over. They went to France, they went to Italy. I decided, through my family who had some distant relatives in Sweden, to go to Germany on the train, to Copenhagen --

I Oh, my goodness!

MS Across the straight to Malmö up to Sweden.

I Right through!

MS But you know, what did I know? And up to Stockholm and to Gothenburg.

I And you were by yourself?

MS Yes. But jumping ahead, I got the last boat -- the last Swedish boat -- which took thirteen days to come home -- up over the North Sea, compared to the one going over. I got the last boat out before war was declared.

I And did you notice anything when you were in Europe, in terms of --

MS Only going through Germany. I didn't notice anything in Holland, but you got on the train I guess Amsterdam. And I had to change at Hamburg. The German trains are set-up where you have six people, three on each side. And the natives all have to say -- and I don't know what I mean by natives -- what nationality they were. But they would have their box lunch with them, and they would often leave some. I didn't know enough to take any lunch. And there was a German soldier in the cabin, and he didn't speak English, but I said in English that I had to change trains in Hamburg, and these people were going through to somewhere else, and he said -- by hand motion -- that if I went with him, I gathered, that he would put me on the right train. Which was a help. I mean, I didn't know -- I couldn't speak German. And so we got off in Hamburg, and he motioned for a cup of coffee, and so I guess we went to what would be considered an outdoor beer garden, and we had a cup of coffee. Now, he had enough English to understand what I said, and I could gather some of the meaning of what he was trying to say. Now, I got that it was all right for the two of us -- two fingers -- but for three, no. So if three people -- now, this was in September -- end of August.

I And what city were you in at that time?

MS This was Hamburg, in Germany. But if three people gathered, that was too much, and we would be told to move on. So I got on the right train and got off at Copenhagen. You wouldn't know anything was -- I mean, nothing was happening. But there were a lot of soldiers in Germany. On the train, on the ground, as you pass through the different towns, from Copenhagen, I stayed, I think, three days, and took the ferry over to Malmo, and went up to Stockholm. The national board had arranged safe hotels to stay in. I mean, I think they all were safe in those days.

I Right, at that point.

MS You never thought anything about anything.

I Right.

MS I decided to take a day trip on a boat around the islands of Stockholm, which, I think, is built on seven islands. There was a young man behind me – at the ticket counter -- and he asked where I was from, and I told him Bridgeport, Connecticut. He said, "I was born in New York City, but we came here as a family during the Depression." So he filled out an agenda for me for that week, and included himself in it. [laughs] Which was very nice, really. I saw things I wouldn't have been able to see on my own. But the best part of the story really, is that -- this was in 1939, I was married in 1948 -- we corresponded -- during the war we couldn't. The Swedes had the training. The military training was for everyone. They all had to serve, I think, two years. So it wasn't a strong correspondence by any means, but we corresponded and got to know each other pretty well. I was married on a Saturday in February in 1948 --

I You didn't marry him. Who did you marry?

MS No. I married Rob Schneider.

I Oh.

MS On the day after I was married, the front doorbell rang on Barnum Avenue, and my mother went to the door, and here was Tory Anderson with a big bouquet of flowers.

I Oh!

MS Which was really a very nice story to tell! [laughs] The reason he was there was that -- and, of course, we called him as soon as we got back from our honeymoon -- and he was

with the United Nations at this point.

I Oh!

MS So we asked him to come up, and then he had us down, and he married. So we saw them over a period of three years.

I Oh, that's wonderful.

MS But it's a nice story to tell.

I Yes.

MS But getting the last boat out, the older people -- it was very sad for them because they didn't know whether they would ever see their…

I Yes.

MS And, of course, Norway was the Quislings, and they didn't know what was to come, but they learned soon afterwards. But that could have been scary. Now, the people that didn't leave -- that had jobs that they could take a month off after the conference and go to Italy and do all the things that they want to do in the art field -- they weren't able to ever get out.

I Wow.

MS They had to stay until the war was over. Well, I'm sorry.

I No, that's wonderful. It's interesting.

MS So that means that –

Section 2: Working in Bridgeport

I Now you're back in Bridgeport again.

MS I'm back in Bridgeport, and I'm going to work for the Brass Company.

I Bridgeport Brass.

MS Bridgeport Brass Company.

I Which was located where?

MS On Kossuth Street and East Main Street, and then they had another plant on Housatonic Avenue. I was interested, at that point, in personnel work. The war was on. There weren't -- the jobs that were available would be in industry, and, of course, Bridgeport was big in industry.

I Yes.

MS And so the Brass Company wasn't that far from where I lived, and I could walk. This was one of the things that Mr. Jarrett picked up on, and said you could walk -- I said, "Do you know Bridgeport?" He said, "That's why I asked you if you could walk." I said, "No question at all." It was the beginning of what was then Yellow Mill Village, which turned into Father Panik Village.

I Right.

MS I said there were trees and there were flowers and there was shrubbery.

I It was a beautiful area.

MS It was lovely. There was never any qualms about walking at all, and you passed a church on the way, and then it was the Brass Company. And when I went to see what kind of jobs would be open -- I was thinking in terms of personnel work at that point --

I You could type in there? Did you know how to do things like that.

MS Yes, but not too well.

I That wasn't your forte.

MS No. But I didn't know what was.

I Right.

MS When you're looking for a job, you either have the qualifications to do A, B or C, or you

don't have any qualifications. If you were in liberal arts, you looked around to make your own way. And so I said I was interested in working with people, and the man said, "Well, maybe you found your home." I said, "What is open? What do you have to offer?" He said, "Well, the Brass Company is still turning over their machinery into what would be considered war work jobs." But he said, "Because we're going to do work for the Navy, they have certain provisions and people that we hire -- not all people." But he said, "They demand that we have a woman working with women in the factory." He said, "What do you know about machinery?" I said, "Not very much, but I can learn. What would the qualifications, what wou ld the job description be?" And he told me. He said, "But first, before that would be open, would you be willing to do suggestions?" I said, "What are they?" It's a whole other world.

I Suggestions?

MS They had boxes, like mailboxes, in the different departments. He took me on a tour of the Brass Company. You know, they had dirt floors and they had a lot of machinery a lot of different departments. Acid rooms. They were working on research and development on the first aerosol can -- how to use it and spray it and it's not good for environmental purposes.

I Right.

MS But they showed me around and they said that the suggestion job would be very shortly, but people -- the employees -- would put in suggestions on either eliminating a step in one of the machines to go on, or adding something. It would be a good education for you, in order to get used to the machinery. So I said, "That sounds very interesting." So I worked for a man by the name of Nels Nelson, and it – boy, I mean life is very interesting. If I can jump ahead, when Fairfield Grace Methodist Church was constructed forty years ago, and we were fortunate -- Rob and I -- to be able to be in on that early floor. It was a lot of work, but they took two people from the Methodist Churches in Bridgeport and came up with twelve people. We were -- I guess you'd have to say, the founders of the church, and finding property and setting the thing up. We merged with Grace Methodist Church on Clinton Avenue and Fairfield Avenue, and then we merged

with Wesley Church, and who was the leader of the Wesley Church, but Nels Nelson.

I Oh!

MS Whom I worked for.

I A small world.

MS Yes, it really is. Which also makes you realize that you have to live the kind of life that you're never afraid to go back to, seeing people in the future.

I Yes.

MS So that I did this job with Nels Nelson, and one of us would go around and collect the suggestions, and there were numerous suggestions.

I And that's what a suggestion was?

MS I mean, you could discard them if they wanted ballpoint pens -- if they had them in those days -- instead of another pen. That you throw out.

I [laughs]

MS You acknowledge them, but -- but then there were some good suggestions on manufacturing suggestions, as to what they could do.

I What they could make.

MS Not necessarily what they could make, but how they could make it. So that they had the order in front of them, and they would carry it out according to -- it was unionized companies, so that the union had a big say in how you did things. But that they agreed that you would get some money for the suggestion if it was implemented. So that the people were very ready --

I --to give you suggestions. [laughs]

MS Yes. So you may only get twenty-five dollars or you may get a hundred dollars.

I Oh, my goodness!

MS And if they could save enough money in a year, they would get that much more money -- a percentage of the thing.

I That's interesting.

MS So I learned a lot about the operation, and Nels was an engineer, so he would certainly educate me in that field. Then the safety job, which was what I was

hired for, came. Now, the Navy required a woman to work with women in the factory, when they didn't feel comfortable going to the union. Or that they had something they went to the union with, but the union didn't do anything about it. So it was an interesting job. Before the war, it wasn't necessary to have guards on machines that would save you from losing a finger or an eye injury. They didn't have any dress code.

I Safety goggles and all that?

MS Yes. Well, shoes, where they had hard toes. So if they dropped a big piece of steel on their foot, it wouldn't harm them. Well, it might.

I They didn't have things like that?

MS No, there was no reason to. But when you had the contracts from the services of the government, then there were other things that they had to do. And, of course, the Brass Company was strictly Navy. They did -- not any of the Army or Air Force work. It was just the Navy. And GE did something else. So I was on the 8-to-5 shift, I guess you would say.

I How old were you at this point, would you say?

MS Twenty. Maybe twenty-one.

I That was quite a responsibility.

MS Well, but you worked with some good people. I was on the 8-to-5 shift, I'd have to say. I worked days. There were three men that worked the three shifts. But they were all engineers, so that from them I learned -- if I didn't know anything, I would go back and somebody would be there. We worked out of the personnel office, and someone would be there when I would say to them, "Can we go out and look at that machine, because there's something the matter with it, and I don't know," and then we would write a report. We'd follow accidents if anything happened to the women. And, of course, people became careless, didn't use guards on the machine, which the union should pick up, but they didn't always. And I had no authority to say, "You've got to do it this way." That wasn't my job. But people would lose fingers, and that would -- or they would be injured in

other ways. And we would follow it, is what I'm saying. There was a hospital -- a two-room medical office, and we'd call the hospital for the Brass Company, and I would change my clothes in the nurse's quarters there. They had at least one nurse on -- sometimes two nurses on.

I Did they, by any chance -- because I've been in Jenkins and seen Jenkins Valves before. Did they check your lead levels?

MS No.

I Because you probably did work with lead at times.

MS Yes. I mean, that's very true.

I Yes.

MS But you'd go into this -- I don't know the proper name -- but they were acid baskets. They were baskets with shells in it, and mostly they did the big -- well, they did a lot of things, but they had twenty-four inch shells -- hollow shells that they would make. But they had to dip them in acid for hardening treatment. You'd go in there and you'd breathe all this stuff in, and nobody -- but that was part of our job. If we could find that there was a real health hazard, then we could make suggestions. Now, I suppose we -- well, we were considered management, and if we made a suggestion that slowed the work down, the unions wouldn't agree with us. Because that would mean the man had to work longer on doing this one project, I suppose you'd say.

I So the unions actually were against you making the suggestions?

MS No, they weren't against making the suggestions, but if we suggested putting a guard on a machine, it may -- for safety reasons -- it may take them longer to put the work in the machine.

I Right.

MS Whereas before you'd have the guard on. They could do twenty-five an hour, but with the guard on, maybe they could do fifteen. Now, if they were doing piece work, and they got paid for the pieces that they produced for that day, then the worker didn't like it, and the unions didn't like it because the worker would go to

the unions. So the union would come into the personnel office and say, "We have to have a conference." But it was an educational -- and, of course, you needed the unions. I mean, certainly management wasn't always in the right, either. So that it worked both ways. But that's what made it interesting, I would say. The plant over on Housatonic Avenue is where the officers were. Herman Steinkrauss was the President, and Ruth Steinkrauss Cohen, the daughter, has been very active in the cultural world in the Bridgeport area, and was instrumental in setting up the Bridgeport Symphony and so many other things.

I …and Steinkrauss' Barnum Festival.

MS That's right. I think he was the first --very civic-minded.

I Yes.

MS What they didn't do that they're doing today, in 1997, is loaning people out. Now, the banks today would loan someone out to work with United Fund and they have for a number of years now. But in those days, it was usually the officers of the company who would be out in the forefront, and did a lot of good. But I don't ever remember them giving large sums of money, either.

I During World War II.

MS During World War II. I don't know when that started, Mary.

I Yes. Well, you wouldn't maybe know at that point.

MS Yes. Well, I was an underling. I wouldn't know. But today, the grants that are coming into the City of Bridgeport are coming in by and large by the banks, really.

I Right.

MS Of course, in those days -- you have to realize that Bridgeport itself was an entirely different kind of town. You had four banks in Bridgeport, and you knew everybody. Fascinating. You had Mechanics and Farmers, which started for Mechanics and Farmers. You had the City Savings Bank, which was not a commercial bank, and you saved your money on the bank book. Then you had People's, and then you had the Connecticut National Bank. That was it. And you

knew the people.

I Right.

MS They were all local people. Mr. Wood, first, at People's, and then Sam Halloway. And that's when things began to change and the bankers became very active in the community. And today, you don't know who owns any bank anymore.

I Right.

MS And there is no --

I They don't know. [laughs]

MS And you have to give identification of five times to be sure that you're doing the right thing. But you could take this five-cent bus from the Brass Company or from my home, and get off at Congress Street and go to a movie. No, you would have to go to Broad Street. And you'd walk up maybe five or six blocks to the movie house, which is twenty-five cents to get in. When I was very young, they had Vaudeville on the stage, with an orchestra, and then you had the movie on top of that. Now they don't have any. You've got all these big conglomerates with ten or twelve movies in one place. But Main Street -- you could window shop. You had some very nice stores, you had a couple five-and-ten's along the way. You had the restaurants that were very nice. And you walked. You didn't think of anything at night. I mean, you go to a movie and walk at eleven o'clock to go pick up the bus.

I Wow.

MS That's where some of us can see big changes that have happened.

I Yes, I guess. [laughs]

MS Yes. Which is unfortunate because there are still people that want to walk -- people that live in the area. But they don't feel any safer than some of the rest of us would today. And that's too bad. They had a policeman on the corner of Main and Fairfield. They had a policeman on the corner of the banks. And the policeman was there to help you across the street. I mean, the cars were beginning to come in more. During the war, you couldn't get an automobile.

You had to buy a second-hand one, and that didn't always work well.

I So it was gasoline rationing.

MS That's right. You had gasoline rationing, you had meat rationing, you had coffee rationing. What else? Well, you couldn't get tires for the car, for example, because they weren't making any of these things. Until the war was over, which brings you to --

I So you were, at the Brass?

MS Yes.

I And you worked there for how many years?

MS Three years.

I In the same position?

MS Yes, yes. I could walk over to Housatonic Avenue and they didn't have that many women there. They had the foundry there, run by men. And then they had a big area, which they called the Extrusion Area, and they'd take a billet of brass that was probably twenty-four inches long by -- oh, six inches wide --

I They called it a billet?

MS A billet. And they put this in the machine, and it would snap out probably fifty feet of very thin wire at this point which they would use in one of their operations. That was fascinating to watch, but it was very dangerous, I would have to say.

I So, actually, what were you doing physically?

MS Physically, I just talked.

I Just talked? [laughs]

MS I didn't operate any machines.

I No machines?

MS No machines. I was there -- if they were really on a dangerous job and had long hair, I would have to apologize and say, "I'm sorry, but for your own sake, you've got to put a cap on. It's easier than losing your whole scalp." And they would. It was harder on the shoes because nobody wanted to wear the shoes. But if they

were on a job, all it took was one person to be injured, and then everybody would wear it. The women had to wear the coveralls that I had on.

I Like in the picture?

MS Yes. Because if you had loose blouses, that would get caught in the equipment. It was more of a check on the women, really, so that they wouldn't get hurt. It was knowledgeable for me because if they didn't understand something, I could find someone who would explain it to them, if they felt uncomfortable doing a job. I mean, I never would interfere or wouldn't. That was not my role. But I could get somebody -- and the foreman of the department, usually. But anybody coming into a department, just like anything else -- nobody likes it too much because they think that you're going to interfere with their authority. And that wasn't the point. But it took all kinds of people to do all kinds of jobs. And there were a lot of women employed. And that was just the Brass Company. I mean, when you think of Singer's, they sold sewing machines for how long a period? And then, of course, with the war, they needed the sewing machines to make uniforms. So that they were busy. And it was interesting because the East Side of Bridgeport had all these factories, but in order for these factories to produce, they had to have the tool and die companies, and they had to have other companies that would supply them with whatever was needed for their job or for their production. And then from the east side of Bridgeport, you had your Main Street, and you had your downtown, let's say. And you had the north end of Bridgeport, where St. Vincent's Hospital was. That stayed pretty residential. In the south end of Bridgeport, you had Warner Brothers and you had Jenkins, but that was about it. But then you go to the West End -- the West Side -- and it's like the East Side and East End.

I Yes.

MS There's a big difference there, and I never could understand where it stopped and where it started. But the West End -- you had Harvey Hubbell's, you had Westinghouse, you had Bryant Electric, and probably half a dozen more. All

doing their own thing. All turned into government work at the end. But when the war was over in 1945 -- I have two daughters and they have always -- they still continue to ask what was the matter with the women that they got out of the jobs? Why didn't they stay? Because there was no women's revolution.

I And you were still living at home. You weren't married.

MS I was still living at home. I wasn't married. I say to them -- I say to you -- there was no question. I mean, the men went off to war, and that's what the posters all said -- and that every man that worked in industry in Bridgeport was promised a job when they came back. So that they were the ones that we all felt -- which is not true today. And, of course, the conditions are different with two people working in a family. But we got out so that they could come in. But there was never any feeling about that. And I think that the women that wanted to stay could stay. There was enough room for everyone. But I just felt that they probably would have eliminated my job anyway because that was requirement that they didn't….

I --of the war contract?

MS -- of the war contract. And I'm sure that the industry felt that they didn't need an extra salary.

I So you really were Rosie the Riveter, in a way.

MS Yes. I have never seen the movie.

I Yes, right.

MS But Mr. Jarrett from The "New York Times" said, "Do you remember what the salaries were?"

I Oh, that's a good question.

MS I said, "That's the one thing I don't remember." But I was with someone yesterday who worked at General Electric during the war, and we got talking about it.

I A woman?

MS A woman. She in the personnel office also.

I Oh, okay.

MS And she was up in Keene, New Hampshire. She came down and I had lunch with her, and she said, "We never talked about the war years or what you did or what I had done." I said, "I was at the Bridgeport Brass --which was funny because most people [unclear].

I Yes.

MS I said, "Where were you, Marge?" She said, "I worked for General Electric Company." She said, "I'll never forget it. Because I was in the personnel office, I got twenty-five dollars a week." I said, "By phrasing it that way, what do you mean?" She said, "Well, the other women in the office got eighteen dollars. But I was out and around more, and the responsibilities, I suppose, were greater." But I said, "What about the people in the factory, Marge?" And she said, "I don't know. There was no way of telling. Because if they were in piece-work, if they were fast -- and some people are faster than others -- than they would get more money. Or they would be on a job that paid X number of dollars." But in retrospect, twenty-five dollars a week in those days was regarded as a lot.

I Yes.

MS I mean, gas was what, twenty-five cents a gallon?

I Probably more than a school teacher at that time, because I don't think they got paid much at all.

MS I don't either. No. I think you're right. And ministers didn't get anything. I mean, they got their food and they got their housing as part of their salary. But I can remember -- there was very little money passed, and people were bringing food. Can you imagine that?

I But how? You went to the movies, or you went to the --?

MS Oh, no question.

I You spent money.

MS Yes.

I Did you go to the theaters on Main Street?

MS Oh, yes. Oh, sure. Yes, yes. I mean, that was all you could do. And they had bowling.

I Bowling, yes. I have heard that more so then --that it was a way to meet men.

MS Oh, really?

I It was okay to bowl. I just read that.

MS Well, in those days, you had -- you see, I'm an old YWCA member, and when they built the new -- when they moved from Barnum Avenue and built the new building -- went out on a capital fund campaign -- built what is now the senior center Golden Hill Street in Bridgeport, in 1942 they moved into that. Now, they had a good-sized gymnasium with three badminton courts on it. And, of course, people that were not in the service that were either 4-F or were married and had children -- Monday and Tuesday nights, we'd go to the YW and play badminton.

I Oh, so you always kept up with the Y?

MS Yes, yes. Margaret Driscoll was one of the partners.

I Oh!

MS When I see her now she said, "You went into the Y for what reason?" I said, "To play basketball." She said, "I did, too." She said, "I graduated from law school and then decided to go to the YW for exercise." Of course, they didn't have any exercise or aerobics stuff then. They didn't even have it in high schools.

I They didn't even tell you to do exercises, really.

MS No. That's right. My recreation would be -- and I was a skier. You skied anyplace you could. Newtown Golf Course. I played tennis on Laurel courts or Beardsley Park courts. It didn't cost a nickel, but you had to get a permit in order to play. And you did. And still I was living at home, so I had the bicycle. You'd ride up to Beardsley Park. And, of course, you had the parks. They were beautiful parks. You had Seaside Park to go swimming. You could take the bus into Seaside Park, right down to the pavilion. You had Beardsley Park and fresh water what I call the Reservoir.

I Right.

MS Well, I guess they still swim there in the summertime.

I Yes.

MS That would be considered your recreation. But then, because my family would go to New York. And, of course, the trains ran. I mean, you could go into New York, and that's where I got my start in museums.

I Oh!

MS I mean, they were all free, and it didn't cost you anything to go into the Metropolitan. We used to go -- we saw a lot of plays in New York for two dollars and forty cents, up on the top balcony. What did we know? Now they've brought them all back.

I Showboat and things like that?

MS Showboat and Carousel and things like that.

I The Rogers & Hammerstein?

MS Right -- all of that. But then we graduated to, say, a $4.40 seat, and that was a first mezzanine for four dollars and forty cents.

I [laughs]

MS So when you say twenty-five dollars a week --

I It went a long way.

MS It went a long way. And then in Times Square, you had family places like Toffenetti, which today, you would call it an Italian cuisine. But then it was spaghetti and meatballs, that you would get. [laughs] For, I don't know -- maybe ninety-five cents or a dollar and a quarter. You had Maxwell House coffee and a donut for probably twenty-five --

[end of side one, tape one]

I So you'd buy a donut and a cup of Maxwell House coffee for twenty-five cents?

MS Sure. And, of course, in New York you walk all over anyway, so there was never a thought of taking a taxi anywhere. You got off the trains, you wanted to go to Times Square or the theater, you would walk.

I So we've all gotten too soft?

MS Yes. Well, I still walk -- up until this last year we got off the train, we always walked to Times Square and think nothing of it. You walked in Bridgeport. The high school people, as I said before -- they must have walked two to five miles to go to Harding High School. And it rained and it snowed, and that was it. There was never any bus facilities in use at that time. And nobody thought anything of it. Your parents said -- if you lived on Kossuth Street, you walked to school. And if you didn't feel like it, you'd walk anyway, because that's the only way you could get there. New York was great because New York was reasonable. But you had to have a little imagination to know where to go -- there are a lot of museums. And, of course, today – I'm trying to think. I think there are sometimes a fee to get in for special exhibits at the Metropolitan.

I Oh, yes. Well, actually, I think it's still five dollars for the Met -- suggested donation.

MS To get in. But that's a change, let's say. It holds a lot of…

I Right, right.

MS And, of course, today -- and I'm moving much farther ahead. Today, the senior citizens come down to New York for under ten dollars on the train, and you still pay too much money to go the theater. But it's there, and it's only -- what is it? It's not even sixty miles away.

I Yes. A lot of people don't take advantage of it. They're so close to New York. When I moved here I was like, "Why don't they go in there more often?" Well, let's see. We're at the end of World War II, and you quit your job. You just went in and quit.

MS That's right.

I The war was over and then you quit one day. That was it.

MS Yes. The boss -- the man I reported to -- was a man by the name of Bill [V---], who was the state trooper who drove the Governor. And, of course, I think this is true that if he had a young family, and if he got into war work, that would save him from being drafted. So that the men I worked with were all married men and

had one or two children.

I Oh.

MS Which meant that they would not be called.

I Oh, I didn't realize that.

MS The other thing is after the war, Mr.[name] said to me, "You can stay as long as you want, Marge. They're not going to get rid of us right away. They still need the Safety Department. But we won't hire another woman because there would be no need to if they go back to doing what they did before the war." And you know, that's a sad commentary, really. If they needed it during the war for the protection and safety and the hazards for women, why didn't they need it after the war?

I Right.

MS And I often wonder now --of course, things are so different. Now, the Brass Company had big machines where they'd do three or four or six or eight operations in one, by having a big piece of machinery with drops of whatever this operation was, so that they could put in a piece of brass and then have it come out, and then have seven or eight operations done by one person.

I Actually, it brings to mind -- were there, since you were in such a position with these women -- and we're getting back to that job again -- were they ever upset about something that we call now sexual harassment? I mean, it must have been unusual for women to be working in a factory, and that may have taken --

MS Well, I think two things happened, Mary. I think either they were complimented and felt that they were being looked upon with pleasure, or they rejected the whole thing. I mean, it was one or the other. If they rejected it, nobody ever bothered them.

I Yes.

MS And if they encouraged it, I'm sure that -- I mean, they could see each other outside of work.

I So that wasn't one of the things that came to your attention?

MS No, no. Never thought about it.

I It must have been a hard time.

MS And, of course, most of the women that worked I think during the war -- it depends on their ages, of course -- but didn't work before, so that this was a new experience. When you worked before the war -- when I worked at the United Illuminating Company, for example, mostly an older crowd of people who have been there for a number of years. And the company cherished that because they were good employees, and the employees liked it because even though they didn't get as much money as everybody -- we still do -- think we should get more -- they were loyal employees and the company was loyal to them. And I think with the war, that that was not -- people didn't feel that way in industry. They didn't know for how long they'd be there. They knew they had to have an income. I'm sure that there were some men who were either drafted or wanted to go to - -volunteered. You see, the day after Pearl Harbor, in 1941, you can't believe the number of people that automatically moved out -- I'll say to Main Street -- and volunteered. The line was blocks of people that just never went back to work, and signed up, and they might have been taken immediately, or might have been taken in two months. But they were out. I mean, they weren't concerned about a job or whether they would have a job. They didn't think that they could be killed. It was just the frenzy of the time with the Pearl Harbor attack that made people into different kinds of people, I would say. And so when the women came, I'm sure there were people who had children, but they never talked about it. I would never know unless I asked. This is the time that people came up -- blacks came up from the south. The Ferrar Family -- a wonderful Bridgeport family.

I Yes, I know them.

MS I see Doris once a month. After fifty years of high school -- I think I said this to you before – we meet once a month for a month -- the Ferrars are one of them. Gerry, Gerry Johnson comes every once in a while.

I Yes.

MS And they say, when we talk about anything and everything, they'll say it's remarkable. There were only two black families -- the [unclear] Family and the Ferrar Family -- on the east side of Bridgeport. In my high school days, those were the only two families. A [family name] played on the football team, and the Ferrars had seven children.

I Yes, they did! They still have the same house, don't they?

MS Yes. The mother is a hundred-and-four-years-old.

I Yes. We're going to be talking to her, too.

MS Oh, she's great. She really is. When she had a birthday party -- Gerry goes to the Golden Hill Methodist Church, and the whole family came in from all over this country -- big family. Children, grandchildren, great grandchildren. And they took over the sanctuary, and the mother -- when she was a hundred-years-old -- the great story is that the son brought in from Chicago, who was in the fur business -- brought in four fur coats to bring in from New York. So he said to his mother, "I don't have to bring these in right away. Why don't you wear one each day."

I Oh!

MS Which is wonderful! Where do you ever hear stories like that?

I And were there blacks working in the factory?

MS Yes. Well, this is when they came up. But before we go to that, the Ferrar Family -- Doris Ferrar said that any of us -- any of the blacks, who now might have been married and had their own place -- if we had an extra room -- my mother and father, for example, had an attic. And they fixed the attic up, so anybody coming in that knew them from North Carolina or Virginia or somewhere -- or there was a registry someplace -- that they would take in not a border, but they would rent the room out -- let's say it that way. Until the person got on their feet with a job. And then they would find their own housing. And, of course, that's what made -- with all the people coming in from the south, and from all over -- blacks and whites -- and didn't leave after the war -- that's what

made housing so difficult to find. When we were married and Rob began to look -- I worked on Saturdays at the D.M. Reed Company -- I'd moved on to that.

I That was your job after World War II?

MS Yes, after World War II, in the personnel office on Broad and John Street. And when Rob looked for rent when we were going to be married, the only thing he could find was rent on the third floor in North Avenue for some exorbitant amount of money, which was three times what he was getting a week, which we couldn't afford.

I Wow.

MS And that's why it always disturbs me a little -- when the publicity and the press comes out saying that -- I'll be personal. Saying that I deserted Bridgeport, and fled from the urban area. We didn't flee from the urban area. If we could have gotten something in Bridgeport. What did we know about Fairfield? Nothing. For the people who moved to Stratford or Nichols or -- Bridgeport was our home. We knew it very well, and it was a beautiful city, and we had no desire to move to the suburbs. But there wasn't anything to be had, because some of the people who -- everybody didn't go back to their home state, let me say it that way. And so they stayed.

I People who had worked in the factory stayed.

MS Yes. They knew what they were doing, and some -- a good number of them -- kept their jobs. I mean, the Brass kept on other people. It was only when they had to get rid of people was when a group came in and worked in such-and-such a department, for example, and there were no other jobs around in the company, then they would have to let someone go. And the people had to understand it because they worked all during the war, and these guys who were in the service, overseas, let's say. So that the black population that came in during the war – a number never left. They stayed here. They lived in the houses in the Bridgeport area because they didn't go to the suburbs. So that the people who, when they came back from the war and were married -- if they weren't married, they'd go

back home. So they were all right. I mean, they could stay in Bridgeport. But for the rest of us, there was no place to go but out. And we just gravitated towards Fairfield because it was only ten minutes away from –

Section 3: Husband and Home

I So you didn’t actually get -- so you got the job at Reed and you met your husband --

MS I met him at a party, but as I say, I worked from 1945 to 1948 in D.M. Reed’s. And that was an interesting job because again, we’re moving from a war period to a peace period, and for women -- I don’t know what they did. I wore the outfit. I wore the coveralls.

I When you were at the Brass?

MS Yes. But when I say I don’t know what women did during the war because what was happening in department stores is that many of the -- there were no nylon stockings -- they called them nylons in those days.

I Right.

MS I can remember there would be lines outside in the arcade around the corner, and when there was a shipment of nylon stockings that came in.[laughs]
And they were stockings. They were not pantyhose, as we have today. And there were none during the war. There weren’t other things in the department store. So that as we got into a peacetime economy, there were more things that would come back. GE couldn’t produce any appliances, for example. And when the appliances began to come in to the department stores or anywhere -- and they didn’t have Caldors or Bradlees or K-Mart in those days -- the store was busy. And so we hired help and we had part-timers -- high school people, who would come in on Thursday night, because they were open on Thursday night, and all day Saturday. My job at D.M. Reed’s was to relieve someone to go to lunch, so that I got to know all the departments. And they had -- in those days they had bays. Bays were individual little islands, where they would have merchandise. They had a good jewelry department, they had a men’s department, but they had a sports store that they called the Spalding Shop.

I Oh, I have a picture of that.

MS Is that right? Where they sold the golf clubs and the tennis rackets. And that was -- there again -- that was all manned by men. And I don't know if there were ever any women. Not in my time they didn't get in there. The men's department would have men working in it. One of the neighbors that was up in the penthouse here, works at Lord & Taylor in the men's department. I said, "Helen, do you sell suits?" She said, "Oh, sure. We do measurements, and we do all that." All I could think of was --

I They had not heard of that -- yes.

MS But all I could think of is the cosmetic department would be run by women from -- I can't even think of the names because I'm not into that. But Charles of the Ritz would have their own worker come in from New York, and they would pay her. Reed's wouldn't have to pay her. So that the women would do that, but you'd never think of hiring a man, even to sell men's lotion or hair stuff. It was a different kind of world then Ihave to say, where women didn't think they were discriminated against. They were treated rather well, I have to say. Nobody ever got to this -- to this day -- nobody ever makes the kind of money that they think they're worth, or should have. And I think fifty percent of the time, they're probably right. But in those days, they would come in and ask for a raise, and they would -- their portfolio would be looked over, and sometimes they would get an automatic raise. But it was never a fight. The women accepted what they were offered, I think I should say it that way. And never thought anything about it. And I don't know. I think it probably was in the 1960s that things began to change. You see, I'm still talking about the 1940s.

I Yes. You're still on before you were married, actually.

MS We got out of the Depression with the war, but the people that were living in the 1940s were still of a Depression mentality, which meant --

I Glad to get what they had.

MS Yes. And never wanted to go back to what would be poor days of economy in their own family.

I And you probably weren't thinking about health insurance and things like that.

MS No, no.

I There was --

MS Blue Cross & Blue Shield came in quite early. But companies didn't give it out. I mean, they didn't -- I think maybe Reed did.

I They had like a sick benefits society, didn't they?

MS That's right. Sure. And they had credit unions that they could put money into -- savings accounts, I would say. But not a 401 account, or anything of that sort. That was way behind.

I [laughs]

MS But the department stores began to get the equipment that was now being manufactured after the war. But to go back to the people of the Depression mentality, they didn't go out and buy new refrigerators. And you have to realize that ranges and refrigerators weren't made during the war, so that there was a big pick-up in the economy, and mostly it came from the young marrieds, because they were moving into apartments that did or didn't have appliances. And, of course, in those days, they didn't rent. They didn't rent furnished apartments, so they'd grab a chair here from one member of the family, and something else from another member. And you needed a toaster, you needed a coffee pot. It wasn't electric, necessarily. But those are the things that came in. And that was big boom, again, for -- you have places like Yurdin's and stores on East Main Street that never existed before, but came in with appliances because there was big need for them. So now we're over.

I Well, so then you met your husband at a dance.

MS At a party -- a family party.

I Oh, a family party?

MS Well, my family knew his family.

I Oh.

MS And when he came back from the service, they had a big party with all the people

he ever knew, I guess. And I met him, and I dated him shortly thereafter.

I And he had been in the service?

MS Yes. He was in the ski troops -- the mountain troops.

I Oh. He liked to ski, too.

MS Yes, yes. He was in the mountain troops in Colorado, and then with the Battle of the Bulge, they took most of these people that were on the ski troops, and sent them right into Germany, and he was in the long lines communication, and followed Patton. So he was in Germany for two-and-a-half years.

I There must have been great stories about that.

MS Yes. And, of course, the Army was the Army.

I Yes.

MS The Army was never organized. He and a friend put themselves on leave for three months, and they skied all the places like San Moritz and [unclear] and things we never could afford to go back to do.

I Oh, my!

MS And he met a man who had a mimeograph business in Switzerland, when he was skiing there, and this man said -- Eric Pfister was his name, so he had Pfister Office Supplies --big, I guess, in Switzerland. And he said to Rob and his friend, "I've done this with others. You seem like two nice, young men." He said, "I will take you around to different ski areas, and I'll pick up all your bills, I'll put you in a good hotel, pay for your dinners, if you turn over your government check to me in the form of a post office money order." He said, "It will be a fair deal. I'm not out to make any money. What I want to do with that, since we don't have anything here, in Europe -- especially after everything was flattened in Germany and Austria and France and Belgium and Holland -- he said, "What I expect is, he was married and had a family, I want to go to the States and buy a refrigerator and buy a washing machine, and buy all these things. But I need American dollars." He said, "There's no way I can get them, except I've done this with a couple other young men." But he said, "If you're willing to do that" -- so it worked.

I Wow.

MS They had a great time for three months. And I said to him -- after I knew all this -- I said, "Why did you ever come home?"

I [laughs]

MS Because he was living the life you never could live. I was glad he came home, but that wasn't the point of the story. I mean, there were a lot of deals, I guess, that were made. Legitimate deals.

I Yes.

MS And it benefited both of them. Then when he came here, to this country, we were married. He had come, I guess, a couple times. He was a businessman, so apparently he had done some business here. We had him for Sunday dinner.

I This was the man?

MS This was the man.

I Oh, okay.

MS So I said to Rob, "What do you think of a pot roast?" And, of course, we had built our house on the G.I. mortgage, so that we were able to get the loan. That's the only way we could pay the house.

I Right.

MS And so Rob had built a big fireplace outside.

I Oh, my!

MS Well, what did he know about building a fireplace? But it was a huge, six-foot tall thing. [laughs] So he said, "We'll cook out." He said, "If Roosevelt can give King George the hot dogs and all that, why don't we do that?" I said, "I think we should do something more substantial." He said, "No, that would be very good. We'll have potato salad and sauerkraut." It poured that day like you never saw it pour. [laughs]

I [laughs]

MS I mean, can you imagine sitting at a dining room table, which we happened to have, with the hot dogs and the sauerkraut and the potato salad? [laughs]

I He was probably worried. Where did your husband work?

MS He worked for his uncle. His uncle was George Schwab. It was Schwab & Company, industrial engravers.

I Oh, okay.

MS He could have been deferred and not gone into the service because they were doing war work. They did the dyes -- everything has a mark on it. No matter what it is. I mean, your stoves, your -- anything -- an industry has to have some kind of a mark. And that would be what they did -- marking tools. They had a second shift during the war, and he was not here. He was in the war. They had, I guess, maybe twelve or fourteen people. But then it went down to three or five. And he became a partner with his uncle, George Schwab, of Schwab & Company, and it was really only Schwab & Company and Schwerdtle, that were here in Bridgeport, doing the same kind of work.

I And they're still there.

MS They did all the industry, and when Rob got -- Rob wasn't sick, but he had medical problems -- and after he had gone to the Lehey Clinic -- and Jack Schwardle -- I think those boys are marvelous boys -- Jack and Penny. They approached Rob and said, "Any time you want to merge, we're willing to talk about it," and they talked about it, and they merged.

I Oh.

MS Then Rob, I have to say, went to work for him -- took all his customers with him, but was under the guidance of -- Jack --

I [unclear]

MS And the father, who was wonderful.

I Right there, on Fairfield Avenue?

MS Elm Street.

I Yes, right.

MS The Methodist Church -- on the same thing. But they're such a nice family, really.

I Very nice. Yes.

MS They did a lot of war work.

I Yes, maybe I should talk to them. Who is there, still?

MS Oh, they're there. Jack and [unclear].

I I know that Schwerdtle is, but Jack is -- how old is Jack?

MS Oh, no. Jack is younger. I don't know how old he is. When I say younger, what do I mean? His father is still alive. The father would be a great guy to interview. If you ever talk to Jack, ask him if you could -- what's his father's name? Hubert. Yes, Hubert. Hubert Jordan. He had a lot of dogs at one time. He lived in Newtown. I don't know whether he still does or not. But if he's okay, he'd be -- and he would know everything about the war years and prior, because I think it was his father who started the business -- Hubert's father -- so that it goes back a long way.

I So getting back to your husband worked there.

MS Yes. And came back from Germany, went back to work for the uncle. When the uncle died, then he had the business, which was a good business because we had a firm belief that you had to take a vacation and you had to get away, and you can't just stay in. And so by having his own business, it allowed us to do this, is what I'm saying, which was a good way to bring up the kids, too. And now they're bringing up their children that way, which is nice for everybody.

I That's wonderful. What were you doing? Were you still involved with the Y at that point?

MS Yes. Mary, you know, my own daughters say, "Why did you stop working?" I say, "I don't know. Everybody did." I mean, we were married in 1948. We had the house. It wasn't finished, so we did a lot of work ourselves in it. We wanted to get married. We had to wait for the house to go up to get married. So finally we said -- the builder got sick with he said sciatica, and so that meant he was out for two or three months, so we had a Cape Cod house with a breezeway and an attached room, which we called a studio. Now, this attached room would have

been a two-car garage from the side, but we made a room out of it, which was good. So Rob and my father said we could fix that studio up and live in there until -- which would push ahead the builders. There were only two men who worked on it -- Swedes. And when Rob would go out every noon and check on it, one noon he went out and he saw the second Swede up on the top, with a derby hat, putting the nails in, one by one. [laughs] He said, "I don't know. We're never going to get married," which was true because of the time of it. [laughs] But we put up cypress, and another couple helped us and my father, and Rob, and the couple and me -- put up cypress paneling, and of course, I don't know -- there were no places like Home Depot. I'm not even sure where we got them -- West End Lumber Company had it. And then we had electricity and we had a sink in there. When it became a studio and later on, when we had the children and it became a den with a television set, and people always wondered why we had a sink in there. [laughs]

I [laughs]

MS We never bothered to explain why.

Section 4: Art Interests and Sculptor Phillip Pavia

I It was an art studio for a while?

MS Yes. Well, you see, we always did the sculpture work, Mary.

I Oh, good for you. You had a lot in common.

MS So that before we had children, it was not a fussy room. I mean, we did plaster work, and we could spill the plaster on the floor -- it didn't make any difference. And then when the first child was born, we figured that we lost some of this, and had to take the bench out. We didn't have television for a long time, and I guess it was the end. But we didn't need it. And we had a man come up -- Ed Stevert -- from Silver Mine, and he taught us -- every Monday night he would come.

I Oh, so you did have lessons.

MS Yes. And he was great. He married, lived in New Canaan, and he married -- what was her maiden name? A woman whose mother and father were both doctors, and they met on the ambulance runs in New York City.

I Oh!

MS So they had some good stories, to tell?

I Yes.

MS And Ed Steeber, at that point – he had four years undergraduate at Yale, and three years art school, and he did plaques for Columbia University -- the professors -- and Lafayette and other universities, let's say. Henry Littlefield, at that time, was a neighbor of ours, and he called and said to Rob, "Are you interested in doing a couple of plaques?" The first time that UB was given any sum of money that was great was by the Carlson Brothers, in Bridgeport.

I Right. I knew them.

MS UB wanted to put a plaque up in recognition of receiving this money. So Rob said, "No," but a friend of ours who is an excellent sculptor said, "Maybe you would like to arrange a meeting so Ed met with Henry Littlefield and the Carlson brothers." Ed called us and said it was quite a meeting, and he said there was

quite a bit of dissention, and so Rob waited and he said, "I was able to resolve it." He said, "We're going to have a plaque where the two faces are facing."

I [laughs]

MS Because no one wanted to be in the back.

I Oh, my goodness.

MS Each of the two wanted to be in the front.

I Yes.

MS I wonder if the plaque is still there because I --

I Yes. I've seen at least a picture of it.

MS Is that right?

I Yes.

MS But funny story, especially if you knew the people.

I Right. So actually you had a studio right in your house?

MS Yes.

I That's nice.

MS That was an early work.

I This here?

MS Yes.

I It's beautiful! I was noticing it earlier. My goodness!

MS It's been a great hobby. There again, I have to go back to the YWCA.

I And that's where you learned carving?

MS Yes. Phillip Pazia was a Bridgeport, and I think he got five dollars a night for teaching a course, and there might be eight or nine people in the class. And it was one of these gals who was a social worker at the Y and she said to me, "You live across the street. Why don't you come Monday and Tuesday nights and take lessons. You'll never regret it -- in sculpture." Which I did. So I learned different mediums, whether it was wood or plaster or wax or whatever, from Phillip Pavia. Now, in 1941, he went down to New York, in the Village, and we kept in touch with him. I kept in touch with him during the war, and Rob -- when

I married Rob -- Rob had taken lessons from him. He got a studio in Bridgeport, so that that was a real good thing because then we both knew Phil, and we would go down and see him. He lived on 8th Street and they had a Howard Johnson's on the corner of 6th Avenue and 8th, and we would always have a cup of coffee with him. He said, "You know, some Friday night, you should really come down." Now we had two children and they were very young. He said, "Friday night is a get-together of some of my friends," and they weren't famous yet. The "Herald Tribune" art critic is a part of this and you would enjoy the discussions. Rob said, "No, we wouldn't know them, Phil, but who would these people be? Would we be interfering?" He said, "Jackson Pollack, De Kooning, Gorki." You know, they didn't mean anything because they were not recognized at that point. I said, "Hell, we would really like to come, but we've got the two children. What time?" He said, "We get started at about twelve midnight or one o'clock."

I Oh, my goodness!

MS I said, "When is it over?" We have two small children.

I He said, "Oh, probably eight or nine o'clock in the morning." Well, that threw that out the window.

MS Oh, no! So you didn't go?

I No. How could we go at midnight. We had two children? [laughs]

MS I have no regrets. But that's one of the regrets.

I Yes.

MS Because as they became famous --

I You were kicking yourself.

MS Yes. And he was only -- and when I say 'only' I'm being facetious -- only a sculptor, where these were all painters, whether they were [unclear].

I Did he live in Bridgeport?

MS Yes, he lived off Pequonnock Street, and taught at the YWCA. So then why --

I But he was having this in New York, though?

MS Yes. He left Bridgeportin 1941 and moved to 8th Street and stayed the rest of his

life. To finish that story up, last year -- I'm trying to think -- it had to be in the spring -- I don't even know -- what a circle I've had. This last year has been wonderful. It was either the first part of the year or in the spring. My friend, a social worker at the YW -- Gladys Jarrett -- called and said, "The strangest thing happened." She said, "We were looking at Masterpiece Theater on Sunday night and she said it was ten minutes of nine and the program had ended, and I went in to get a cup of tea, and I heard this gravel voice, and I knew it was Phillip Pavia.

I Oh!

MS She said, "How could we ever follow that?" She said, "I saw nothing." I said, "Call the station -- they can tell you if it was a VCR or something." And so she called and they said they just threw it in because the program ended earlier than they thought it would. So that ended that. So she called a week later and the same thing happened. She said, "How can you follow it?" I said, "I don't know. Let me think." [laughs] And then she said, "I'll call you back in a week." And so I went in to the Fairfield Library and I looked in the phone book in New York, because we had lost track of them now, at this point. I looked in the telephone book and there was no Phillip Pavia listed. Now, the last time we saw him, Rob and I were invited to his opening at the Metropolitan of an eight-foot head of Kennedy -- after the assassination.

I Wow!

MS And so we called and said we would come. He said, "Don't come. Come later, because I wont be able to talk to you," which we did. We met at the museum, and there was a big section of his head cut out, and I said, "Now, that's symbolic." He said, "No, I just ran out of clay." [laughs]

I [laughs]

MS Great story. So I went in to the library and I went over to the woman and said, "If I'm trying to find somebody -- I don't know whether they're dead or alive -- and they're not in the phone book -- how could I do it?" She said, "Use a computer."

I Yes.

MS I said it was beyond me, but I'll try. So she said, "I'll tell you what to do. Just press this button, and as the alphabet comes up" -- I got to the P's. By gosh, Philip Pavia's name came up 610 Broadway -- same studio we knew. [laughs] So I figured that he was alive. So I got home -- and you know, it's funny. I'll do a lot of things for other people, but I won't be forward for myself. I mean, if you ask me to call somebody -- I mean, I have to know them -- but I will call. But this was a hard thing for me to do. I mean, a telephone number from the index. So I call and a man picked up the phone and I said, "This is a very strange call, but please don't hang up. I was a student of Philip Pavia years ago. We have been friends over the years, we've lost track of him. He was on television in Portland, Maine. Is he alive?" He said, "I'm his son. He is alive. He's in the studio. He's talking to a man from Switzerland, because he's got a big exhibit going on."

I Oh, my goodness. He hasn't changed. How old is he?

MS He's got to be eighty-five.

I Wow!

MS He's a Bridgeporter.

I Oh, really.

MS There's another. Now he Philip Pavia was a Bridgeporter, probably.

I How do you spell the last name?

MS Pavia. 610 Broadway, New York. I don't know the zip. Can you imagine that, Mary?

I [laughs]

MS I said, "I know when we saw Phil, he had you -- one is Guiseppe -- and one was something else." He said, "My mother's here." Well, then I got real nervous. I said to her, "You don't know me. We've just been old friends from Bridgeport, when your husband was barely…"

I Teaching at the Y…

MS Well, that's right -- at the Y. I said, "That may not mean anything to you, but I will send a letter to both of you, explaining why I'm calling, and that Phil was on

T.V. evidently, up in Portland, Maine." She said, "Oh, that would be interesting." Well, then, as soon as I knew she was receptive, I got a little more talkative. She said, "He'll call you." I said, "He doesn't have to do that. I'm glad that he's healthy and alive and putting on an exhibit in Switzerland." She said, "No, when he gets to it, he'll call." And maybe three weeks later on a Sunday afternoon, I was fortunate to be home -- and he has a gravely voice. He said, "Marjorie." I said, "Phil." I said, "Oh, it's great that you called." He said, "Tell me about yourself. Tell me about Rob." I said, "He died." He said, "Tell me about Gladys and Florence. Tell me about Margaret Driscoll." Also took lessons. He knew her.

I Oh, really?

MS They took private lessons. They didn't take them at the Y. And so we talked for quite a bit, and he said, "Why don't you come down and visit me? You don't come anymore."

I Oh!

MS Over the years, [unclear] when you've known people who were, I guess, regulars. And so he said, "But I will send you some information." So he sent some information on what the exhibit was going to be in Switzerland, and I got…

I Oh, my!

MS So that it's a small world.

I Yes.

MS But now, he would remember a different part of Bridgeport, and I don't know whether he'd want the connection with the New York set-up at all. But again, it's…

I …interesting. Yes. I've never heard of him. It's wonderful.

Section 5: The YWCA

MS But the YWCA had interesting people and qualified people as teachers, I'd have to say.

I Yes. I don't think they do classes like that right now.

MS No. The YW right now is a crisis center.

I Yes, right.

MS And the YMCA, I think, has become a housing unit.

I Right. Very different.

MS Sure. But in those days, you had programs to get people out of their homes. And, I think, all over Bridgeport. There were large families. The Vecchio family had seven or eight children. The Ferrar's had seven children. And so for them to have a place to go -- if you offered programs -- they would come out and participate in the programs. They could be lecture groups, they could be gymnastic groups.

I They didn't have television then.

MS No. They had International Institute, for example.

I Yes.

MS They had programs -- they were all agencies within the Bridgeport area -- that brought the people out.

I So you had two children in the meantime?

MS Yes. Two girls -- Barbara and Sally.

I And the whole time during the 1950s, you --

MS I didn't work -- I volunteered.

I At the Y, mostly?

MS Solely at the YW. But the church began --

I Oh, that's right.

MS In 1956. And so I spent forty years with the church, and we set-up a nursery school, we developed a church, we worked with the New York Conference, and

they sent us a minister. We worked in the school, in what is now Fairfield Woods School. It was Fairfield then, but it was not a junior high. And then we'd built the church and got all the things in place. But then you stayed with it. I mean, because there were so few people to do so many jobs. And then the YWCA -- that was great because in the YWCA -- I guess it's true in most agencies – you're on finance, you're on the board, you're on something else, and if you're able to, you become President. I still think today, it's become a crisis center, but it's taking care of the needs of the women in the Bridgeport area.

I Which is fine.

MS That's what the needs of the day are. What started in 1956 was the church I was doing with the YW. I was President, but I can't remember -- maybe in the late 1960s or the middle 1960s, I would say -- and it was still on Golden Hill Street.

I How did you see things change at the Y? Were there more layoffs and things in the factories and in some of the businesses? Did you see a change in the city or in the Y itself?

MS The Y moved in 1942, but prior to that I'd have to say, ethnically, there was a big Italian group on the East Side of Bridgeport, and they came -- the Y in those days, had a Monday night business girl and a Tuesday night industrial girl, so that the office workers and the people who were clerks, I suppose -- you could go in either night, but your programs were set up for industrial workers or for business workers. Business workers might want somebody to come in. It was kind of a fluffy thing for cosmetics or something of that sort. The industrials girls might want to have a changeover of jobs from getting -- to get out of the factory work that they were in. The church played a big role, as we learned when we did -- Anne Lawrence and I did this history. The Italian girls told us that it would be prior to 1942, so I'm talking now about the mid-1930s to 1942. And these were church-going families -- the Catholics. The priests would say to the girls, "We don't want you going to the YWCA. That's a Protestant organization, and they served." "That's not going to stop us, Father-so-and-so." He said, "But the

church is against that. You're not supposed to go." Now, we never pressed it in our interviews as to what they really did -- what they kept going -- obviously, what that did for the families and the church, I don't know. It's hard to realize that today. It's hard to realize that when the YWCA started, you had to be Protestant, you had to sign a paper saying you were a member of a church.

I Oh, you did?

MS Yes.

I I didn't realize that.

MS It was ridiculous. The changes have been good, is what I'm trying to say.

I Well, obviously Young Women's Christian Association.

MS Yes. But we never thought of it in terms of it. We thought of it in terms of activities, and I think that's the difference. And, of course, they can't change it. They're under national board jurisdiction, too. But in 1942, we moved into the new building, which was magnificent, and there was enough money in Bridgeport, where you had Bryant's money, which went into an art studio that was magnificent in that building. Three rooms -- all kinds of stuff. You had another family giving the library on Golden Hill Street. The National Board at that time, was ahead of its time in saying that the Phyllis Wheatley branch, which was a colored branch -- a black branch -- families -- saying that it's time the YWCA integrated. We should not be separated at all.

I This was what year?

MS 1942.

I Oh! Pretty early.

MS Yes. It was very upsetting to the black families, as Jerry Johnson had said, because they walked from all over Bridgeport to get to Phyllis Wheatley on Sundays, and they would have the dinner, and she said, "You have to realize that many of these people -- many of the women worked for families all over -- knew how to set a table. They had white tablecloths. They had a tea set. They knew how to do things." And Jerry said, "Nobody ever thought that was how we did

things in Phyllis Wheatley. But to give up the family structure of what Phyllis Wheately was and say to women, 'The time has come that we shouldn't be separated. We should go with into one building.' They'd lost their families. A lot of them were --"

I Oh, my!

MS Well, they were very upset to think that they could no longer be separate. I talked to somebody – I can't remember what her name was - who said that they set up Phyllis Wheately the office on Johns Street, which would be diagonally across from where D.M. Reads was. She said, "We have no program, but we wanted to try to keep the families together." And it was sad because we gained people like Mrs. Gardner and somebody else from their Board of Directors, who came into -- you know – you don't even want to say -- "the white" organization – is how they would call us. And it was very sad that the people who came over -- and joined the program groups, said they never felt comfortable. Now, they were too old to do it, is what I'm trying to say.

I Right.

MS But the younger people today would be --

I Wouldn't even blink an eye.

MS No. It was a sad time for them and an uncomfortable time for us because it was mandated by National Board. You could do nothing about it. But we lost some good people and they lost a meeting house. I think people ought to be able to do what they want to do. And I think it's going back to that at this point. That if they want to be separated and have their own program, the Italians have [unclear] and the Germans have the Schwabische [unclear], they're all a part of one, but you should have freedom of --

I Doing what you want to do.

MS Yes. Freedom of choice to do really what you want to do. Maybe they are. I don't know. But it was an interesting time. The program then became different in the new building. Where we had clubs at Barnum Avenue, they had no clubs at

-- again, they were talking oneness and unity. They had a lot of gym work, a lot of exercises -- they called them exercises. They had staff that were physical education people. They had --

I This was during what period, now?

MS 1942, on.

I Oh, okay.

MS I'm trying to remember -- I don't know when the City of Bridgeport bought that building.

I Which building?

MS Which is the Senior Center now. The YWCA building. But I think maybe it was in the 1970s. And then the Y moved two or three places, and now they're on Fairfield Avenue, between St. John's and behind the church. And they are a crisis center, and I believe they are serving the needs of the community by --

I At this moment.

MS Right. And it will change again. I mean --

I Although, don't you think that, don't you wonder if they would like some classes or something like that, like you attended years ago?

MS Well, yes. And, of course, that's where you meet other women. I mean, today --

I You're very isolated.

MS It's very difficult for both -- separately for men and women -- to go to places and -- somebody said to me, "That's why they go to Gold's Gymnasium, because they have both men and women, usually under fifty. So you can meet somebody." But that's sad.

I Yes.

MS It should be other areas outside of going to Fairfield U or UB or to Sacred Heart for a class, where you're going to have to knock yourself out doing outside work and you don't have time if you're a full-time employee, really. That's too bad. I believe that programs can bring people together. I believe that lecture groups can bring people together.

I Before they get to crisis.

MS Yes. That's right. That's right. I think that Fairfield University is great because they offer -- every once in a while you'll see in the paper that they'll have lectures that are open up to the public.

I Yes. They're supposed to be getting Frank McCort there who did Angela's Ashes.

MS Oh, okay. And all you have to do is call them to get a ticket.

I Yes. I saw what's-her-name there -- the black poet?

MS Angie Mayo; Angela Mayo; I want to say Angela Mayo but that's backwards but it's Maya Angelou?

I Yes. All right. Well, we're ending the --

Editor's Note: Unfortunately the last several minutes of the interview tape have been lost; however, this transcript made in 1997 gives the flavor of Marge Schneider's remaining comments

MS Would you agree with that, Mary? That the 1970s were a time of genius?

I Oh, well, yes! I was in high school in the 1970s.

MS I mean, the 1960s were a time when there was a lot of action and [unclear].

I In terms of Bridgeport itself --

MS Well, Vietnam War.

I Right.

MS I mean, you had peace marches here.

I Yes.

MS I think they went down Main Street.

I But what I'm interested in is just work, in terms of when you saw the industries leaving the city. Like, probably, the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s.

MS I'm trying to think.

I Do you remember being affected by that at all? And why people [unclear] by that?

MS No. I had my hair done at Reid's every two weeks.

I [laughs] So, was the Y affected by that at all? I mean, we talked about the crisis center that they eventually -- when did that start in Bridgeport?

MS Now, that I don't know.

I Oh, okay.

MS I think when they sold the building -- whenever they sold the building -- which, I think, had to be in the 1970s. Then they made a mistake, and they admitted this. They bought a house up in Monroe, and they thought that they would be able to -- that public transportation would be able to bring the Bridgeport women out for programs, and they set-up a good program in Monroe. But for whatever the reasons, the bus department -- the busses didn't agree with the scheduling of what they could do. And then, I think, they turned that into a newsroom and house,

which was all right. But that got them out of -- after Monroe -- and they went to smaller buildings. They went to a building on Fairfield Avenue that -- East Main Street first, opposite Motor Vehicle, which was just an office. And then they went to a building across from the apartments on Fairfield Avenue, near the [unclear], and then they bought this building, where they are now. But it's set-up with cubby holes, and they started a day care center, which I think is very sad. Because the women in Bridgeport -- the professional women -- went and said, "We need a day care center." This is a change in the YW. "We need a day care center, and we will support it if you put it up." They put it up, and by then -- okay, this was in the 1970s. You ask the question when do things change. Now, the women had gone to the YW and said, "We will support you if you can put up a day care center, eight-to-five. Then we'll need to transfer bank vouchers and industry was moving out --

I	Things change.

MS	It had changed so fast that they've always had a lot of trouble with the day care center, and I don't think it's in existence anymore because there's no one to support it.

I	Right. You don't hear about it.

MS	And it's difficult because the people that need it -- if they don't get a grant or a government subsidy of some sort, they can't perform. And they have to have good day care employees. I mean, you just don't pick anybody up and say, "We want you to be a sitter." I mean, you have to have qualifications today and accreditation. So that I think that the crisis center came into being -- I know it was there in the 1980s. But it had to work itself up to the crisis center that it is today, because they see a lot of people. And Planned Parenthood had been in at the YWCA, and then they moved out a couple years ago, I think, and went to their own building. They've done programming work, up to a certain point, but now we're not in programming. They're in housing for children and abused women. They're working with convicted -- women going back into society, let me say.

But the sad part is that gradually the city went downhill -- Main Street. Let's talk about Main Street. It went down because the banks were being taken over. Connecticut National went out of business. There was a time when -- well, the City Trust. If you had stocks in City Trust, you lost it all because of the [unclear]. This was all in the 1970s and 1980s. And then Main Street changed. Howlings didn't exist anymore. It's a good thing Murray's was another department store next to Howlings, so you had Smith and Howlings and Reed's to shop, to find out where the best value was for beds, or for anything. They knocked that down and put up the court house. They had a five-and-ten next door to it, on Cannon Street, which was a good five-and-ten, and they had -- this is where --

I	Stiffer things.

MS	It hurts to even talk about it.

I	[unclear] Nut House -- did you go there?

MS	Yes, sure. On the corner.

I	[laughs]

MS	You lived there.

I	We had that in Detroit, too.

MS	But the five-and-ten had a lunch counter, which had good food and was reasonable. And women would go in there for breakfast, and it would be their breakfast and lunch together, for a reasonable price, to get out of their own homes. They'd take the bus over. That's gone. You don't have any of those places anymore. You have fast food. And to me, when industry left, and when the banks became out-of-state banks or out-of-town banks --

I	The other services were supported.

MS	Yes. And there was nobody left to use any of the services that were offered. You know, Margaret [unclear] had her office in an office building between Cannon Street and Fairfield Avenue. You had Michael's Jewelry on the corner of Golding Hill and Main Street. Nobody would support Michael's Jewelry Store. And, then, of course, the malls came in, and that's the worse thing that could

happen to a city because people don't go into the cities anymore in the urban areas -- they go to the malls. So that it was a progression of things that, at the time, I suppose, for developers, were a great thing. But not for the people, I don't think.

I Yes.

MS I mean, the people suffered because --

I Well, how do you see Bridgeport in the future? Do you see it going back to the way it was at all, or --?

MS Oh, I don't think it will ever go back. I think it will come back. But I don't think it will go back. And, of course, people who are not my age wouldn't remember what it was, anyway. But people all over Bridgeport and outlying districts use Captain's Cove and rave about it. I mean, they go over there and they sit and they watch the Rose [H.M.S. Rose] come and go, and when the sail's up, she's beautiful. If Captain's Cove can -- because they don't have a program, but they have something that they can offer -- if Bridgeport can do that with a new harbor plan --

I The baseball stadium.

MS Yes. I mean, whether it flies or not, nobody knows. But I think that -- for example, I knew the Barnum Museum when it was nothing. I went there when I was in high school, and that's in the 1930s, with a young man by the name of Joe Brawner, who was the visual education person for the Bridgeport School System, and he said, "I'm going to cast a snake. Can you come down?" [laughs] And the museum was dark and dingy, and he had a large snake, and he covered it with something and cast it with plaster, and he was going to have to paint it. But I watched this because -- I cast some of the stuff that we had done in sculpture. He said, "You will be interested in this, I'm sure." And I wasn't married. It was a dingy place, and when I'm here -- I haven't been, but I intend to go -- of what they've done to the Barnum Museum in this baseball exhibit alone, has gotten more people into the Barnum Museum in this short period -- and it's going to be

there until March, I understand.

I There's a lot of enthusiasm. Yes.

MS I got a baseball in there.

I Oh, that's right. You said that. The baseball that your son-in-law --

MS Yes. I can't ask him how much it's worth because I can't be an Indian giver. But those are the things that can be [unclear] of why people go into Bridgeport.

I And there are still things in the city that you can't get anywhere else.

MS That's right. No question about it, Mary. The library -- [unclear] Library and you are outstanding contributions to this community. I will say that to anybody. I wish I could put it in headlines or a poster or a bumper sticker.

I [laughs]

MS Because there are things in the Bishop Room that no one has any idea are there [unclear].

I Even [unclear]. [laughs]

MS No. [laughs]

I Like this oral history, now.

MS Yes.

I Well, I thank you for spending time with me today.

MS Well, I thank you for coming here.

I If you think of anything else, we can always return to the tape.

MS And if you think of anything as you listen to this, if you ever listen to it --

I Posterity will listen to this.

MS I mean, if there are questions about what I remembered -- my memory is pretty good, but you know -- I could be wrong.

I Okay. Thank you.

MS Thank you.

End of Interview