Interview with Dorothy Kordich

Date: June 14, 2003
Location: Grosse Pointe, Michigan
Interviewer: Russell Magnaghi

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Russell Magnaghi (RM): Okay, good afternoon Dorothy. This afternoon I would like to interview you about your background, your heritage, your family, your Serbian background. And get your insights into what life was like for yourself growing up in the Detroit area over the earlier years of the Twentieth Century. Could we start with your birthdate?


RM: Okay and could you tell us a little about your, well let’s start with your father’s family, and where they were from in the old country, and how far back they went. So just tell us about your father’s family and then we’ll go to your mother’s.

DK: They migrated to this country from Banat, Yugoslavia and my dad first came to this country in about 1912, and then he went back.

RM: Okay now wait a minute, what was his name?

DK: His name was Isa Sandich.

RM: Could you spell that?


RM: Okay, so he came to the United States. Where did he settle, where did he first settle?

DK: Cincinnati, Ohio.

RM: And what was he doing there, or why was he attracted there?

DK: He had some friends, a lot of the people from his village settled in Cincinnati. So he thought he’d be most comfortable there. And he got a job there and...

RM: Do you remember what he was doing?

DK: Yeah, carpenter work.

RM: Now was that, for the rest of the tape, was that his primary occupation?

DK: Yes. And he stayed in Cincinnati long enough to accumulate enough money to go back and marry my mother, who he left there. I think they were engaged and...

RM: And her name was?

DK: Sevta Sandich. You mean her maiden name? Oh. Her last name Kendersey K-E-N-D-E-R-S-E-Y.
RM: And how do you spell her first name?

DK: S-V-E-T-A. Now, he became John when he went to work, and she became Elizabeth in this country. That’s the translation.

RM: And what did their families do? Now, you said they were from the Banat. Do you know the name of the village they were from?

DK: Well that was the village, because they were from Yugoslavia, I think it was Serbia then.

RM: Okay, and what did they do? Do you remember what they did, very much?

DK: They were neighbors. And grew up together, and my mother was a seamstress, and they have like apprenticeships there, and my dad was a wagon-maker, and cabinet-maker. And that’s what they did. I don’t know what their parents did. But my mother was Hungarian and German but she lived in this town that had a lot of Serbian people. And when they went to school, all the schools taught Serbian, Hungarian, and German because there was such a mixture. So everybody that went to school learned to speak those languages. And...

RM: Okay, so your father went back to...

DK: He married my mother, went back to marry my mother and bring her here.

RM: Now was that, do you know, before or after World War I?

DK: I think it was after.

RM: So he stayed here in World War I? You said he came in 1912.

DK: That’s why he didn’t want to stay over there is because they were always fighting with somebody. He didn’t want to go into the army.

RM: So it was kind of after the War, then they both came back and then where did they settle?

DK: They settled in Detroit.

RM: And that as because?

DK: Because some of his friends from Cincinnati were here.

RM: Was there any connection with the booming automobile industry? Did they come here because of that? I wonder.

DK: Well I think they came here for freedom.

RM: No, but I mean like the Serbians that were in Cincinnati...

DK: Oh yeah, they all worked in the automobile factories.

RM: Which company did they?

DK: Well I think the different ones. But my dad worked for GM.

RM: Okay. Now, they came to Detroit. Where did they first live when they were in Detroit?
DK: They lived on the East Side and it’s called Davison Avenue. And in Detroit, most of the people that migrated here either lived on Russell Street, in that neighborhood. And they all lived like in one section of the city because it was more comfortable for them because they didn’t speak the language, and when they went to the store the man was Serbian. You know, and they could ask the butcher what they wanted or the grocery. And so then there was like three places in Detroit where they migrated. And one was Russell Street, one was Claire Point, and one as Davison.

RM: Okay. And then now, what did your. You said your father worked for General Motors, could you elaborate? What did he do for General Motors? And I think you have a story about what he did on weekends for the...

DK: He did like maintenance in the factory. He really didn’t have anything to do with cars. He had all this repairing the building, making shelves or something like that, you know.

RM: Now which plant did he work at?

DK: He lived, or he worked at I think it was Paquette, I don’t know how you spell that word. And that was in the neighborhood of Russell Street, that little section.

RM: Okay. And when you had told me in the past when we were talking about this, that he was a good carpenter, a fine carpenter.

DK: Right.

RM: And then what did he do on weekends?

DK: Well on weekends he was either building a house for us to live in or he was… like the Fisher brothers had a country home, and they would hire him to do work for them, personal things.

RM: Now, could you talk a little about the whole, because it’s a fascinating story. Could you talk a little about his building homes on kind of the fringes of Detroit, and that whole process?

DK: Right. He always bought property in the suburbs because, for one thing, it was cheaper. And then like when he built our first house, there was no water, there was no gas. But like in a matter of maybe a year both that all came into the little suburb from Detroit. So…where we lived was like right on the fringe of Detroit, but we were still in the suburbs.

RM: Well, let’s maybe just stop and get back to you. You were born in 1916.

DK: Right.

RM: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DK: Yes, one sister.

RM: Okay. And her name was?

DK: Was Violet.

RM: And she was born?

DK: 1914.
RM: 1914 okay. And where was that first place that you lived? Or, not that you remember, or maybe you did, but where your family lived in 1916?

DK: We lived on Hull Avenue.

RM: Now was that out in the suburbs or getting close to the suburbs?

DK: No, that was in the city, and my dad built that house too.

RM: Okay. So he started this process then, from the very beginning, he was building these houses?

DK: Right. And then we’d live in them and they weren’t finished, like you wouldn’t have plaster walls or anything. We’d live in it so he’d be close to the house, to work on it on evenings and weekends.

RM: So he would then finish it off.

DK: Finish it off, we’d live in it for a while and then he’d sell it. And he’d buy the next piece of property.

RM: Okay. We just want to clarify a point, about when he, when you father came. So when do you think he came to Cincinnati in...kind of before 1912?

DK: Right.

RM: And then probably

DK: 1910, 1911 because when he went back, he didn’t stay there, he just married my mother and came back right away.

RM: Okay, so then they both came back around 1912.

DK: Yeah.

RM: And then your sister was born in 1914

DK: 14.

RM: And then you were in 1916, okay. So you lived on Hull Street, could you tell us a little about the interaction of you and your family with the Serbian community. Did you have a lot of interaction?

DK: Not at that time because of transportation, we didn’t have a car. And it wasn’t until I was grown that we went to church or something like that, because he had no transportation.

RM: So he was living really from, as he was building these houses in the suburbs, he was away from the community, so your family didn’t really interact with this community.

DK: No. Just the people that he knew from Yugoslavia that had migrated here.

RM: His friends, village friends and what-not. Would he go visit them or they would come out and visit him?

DK: Yes. I remember going on, walking miles to the street car and then going on the street car to visit somebody on Sunday.

RM: Okay, so this was a very difficult, given where you were living, this was a difficult process?
DK: Yeah. We didn’t really visit too much.

RM: So he was really kind of an adventuresome person. He really didn’t stick with the community, the Serbian community, but he went out into the suburbs. Now, how many houses would you say he built in the course of his lifetime?

DK: Oh boy. I’d say four.

RM: Four houses.

DK: And my uncle came from Europe, and he helped him build his. And of course his friends would help him build his house. He’d help them... so... built a lot of houses.

RM: Oh okay, so there were four of his own, but then there was a lot of...

DK: Yeah, they would help one another.

RM: What was his brother’s name?

DK: That was my mother’s brother. His name was Steve.

RM: Steve. Okay. And then your father worked for General Motors then all of his life.

DK: Right. But different plants, like I think it was Plant Ten. Then he went to Fleetwood, which is way on the west side and they made Cadillacs.

RM: So they moved him around or was he assigned to one plant?

DK: No, they moved him, they moved him around.

RM: So he went where he was needed, if they had to build cabinets...

DK: Once, well like for a time he was at Plant Ten and I don’t know for what reason he went to Fleetwood. And then he just stayed there for the rest of his life.

[Tape skips and continues]

RM: Okay, Dorothy could you tell us a little about your father’s involvement in a farm type setting out in Livonia, or in that area.

DK: Well, he always said to my mother, “I want to buy a farm. I want to live on the farm.” And my mother wouldn’t hear of it... that’s... they argued about that. And so when he retired, they saw this property that I think it was about two acres, or maybe it wasn’t even that large. And they bought this property and it had a house on it, and so that’s where they retired.

RM: And that was about what year?

DK: Around the 50’s I guess... yeah.

RM: And then when they moved there did you go out and visit them, and then I think Diane said that she would go out and help them sell, they had a...

DK: Oh yeah. We’d visit, we’d go see my parents every Sunday. And they had a lot of vegetables and stuff, and they just put out a little road stand up and sell the fresh vegetables.
RM: Did they keep any animals or anything? Chickens?

DK: Chickens.

RM: Chickens, no pigs or anything?

DK: No animals, just chickens.

RM: And then did they sell the eggs or keep those?

DK: No, they kept them for themselves things like that.

RM: Alright, and then what did your mother do, did she do anything other than housekeeping?

DK: That’s all she did.

RM: That’s all she did. Okay. Now could you talk a little about growing up in this kind of moving-situation, where you’re out in the suburbs and going to school and so on?

DK: Well we lived on Hull Avenue first, and then we moved to Jackson, that’s Jackson Street. That’s in a... it’s Warren now. And there were open fields and there were gardens. And I loved it there! They had old cars you could sit in like we’re going to California, pretend, you know? And I used to love it there. I could remember running across the fields and how happy I was. And when you could pull up a carrot out of somebody’s garden and eat it. You know, it was very rural. And we had to walk a mile and a half to school, and I just loved it. But I don’t think it affected me very much, moving, but we didn’t move that often.

RM: But then how did you get sort of reconnected, how did your family get reconnected with the Serbian community? You know, going to church more frequently?

DK: Well then like in 1926 my dad got a car and that way we could move around a little better. And I remember, I don’t know how I, we went to the Serbian Hall, there as this choir. I thought it was so fantastic, and so someone asked me to join and I did. And then me being involved, my parents sort of came back into the community of Serbs. And so that’s what happened, you know we had the transportation to go to church. And go to the different functions that the church promoted.

RM: Could you talk a little about some of those functions? Some of the activities and what it was like, sort of, at that time to be in, really an ethnic community. Because most of the people at that time were from the old country.

DK: Right. Well I thought Russell Street was fun, and I had a girlfriend there. And if you went to the show with the men, who knew how to speak Serbian. It was the Russell Theater and it was a very small movie house. And everybody sort of talked Serbian on the streets and the businesses were all owned by Serbian people. But I never did really live in a Serbian community.

RM: Now did your parents, when you were at home, did your parents speak Serbian?

DK: Yes, because they didn’t know anything else.

RM: So then you grew up learning Serbian?
DK: Yes. I could speak Serbian pretty well today. Because I have no occasion to speak with anybody, it takes me a little time to get the right words, but I can speak to anybody in Serbian.

RM: So if you were to go back, and if they were to put you, like right now you were transported in the middle of Serbia, you could get along?

DK: Oh Yes!

RM: And then quickly get the language up to perfection, almost.

DK: Yes. Right.

RM: Did you speak Serbian as your only language when you went to school or did you?

DK: Yes, yes.

RM: So you didn’t speak English?

DK: No, I didn’t know what they were saying.

RM: Could you just, do you remember what happened when you went to school?

DK: I don’t really remember, I don’t remember it as being difficult. I don’t remember it as being different, I don’t. It must not affected me, I just you know, sink or swim.

RM: And so you very quickly learned, very quickly learned English?

DK: Yeah. They didn’t have special classes for foreigners. You know, with special help? No. They just put you in there.

RM: So then you...

DK: That’s how I got Dorothy. I mean, you went to school, my mother said her name is Zorica. And they said, “Oh, Okay. We’ll make her Dorothy.”

RM: How do you spell Zorica?

DK: Z-O-R-I-C-A, and to this day that is my email address. Zorica at flash dot net.

RM: Oh I see, so you’ve kept the name?

DK: Yeah I thought, well it’d be kind of cool.

RM: And then did you and your sister, you were both in the same situation where you went to school did you kind of interact or?

DK: I don’t think so because she was two years older, so she was, no. I don’t think, I never remember. In fact, when we got, when we lived in Warren, she had to go to a different school because she was older, and I had to go to a country school.

RM: So you went to one of the one-room school houses?

DK: Yes, and it was fun. I loved it there. I’ll never forget, it was on Eight Mile Road, near Vandyke, but I guess it was a mile east. And I remember one morning, I don’t know if I should tell this, we were almost
molested. But we were, my girlfriend and I were going to school and it was like country. And this man parked the car like in kind of the wooded area. And we were walking, you know, and he came over and he gave us each a dime and said you know, “You want a ride, come to the car with me.” So I threw my dime in his face and ran like heck, and my girlfriend, she kept the dime and ran. But, and then the teacher, for about a whole week, she lived like right on Eight Mile Road and VanDyke. And she said, “You come to my house, and my husband will take us to school.” And [inaudible] I thought, but I don’t remember this really effecting me. You know, I just knew instinctively. And my mother never said, “Don’t go with strangers.” You didn’t do that then, you didn’t know they were supposed to.

RM: And then where did you go to high school?

DK: I went to the High School of Commerce, downtown, right across from Cass Tech, which is a very technical school and you have to apply to go there. But I went to Commerce because it was a business school. They taught typing, comp-tometer, and short-hand, and I still do shorthand when I want to write fast [trails off].

RM: Now how did you get from, at that time you were living out in Warren?

DK: Yep.

RM: How did you get down to Downtown Detroit?

DK: Um, I don’t know if I have this in the right sequence. We first lived on Wanda, no, we first lived on Hull Avenue. That wasn’t far from Wanda, then we moved to Wanda while my dad was building that house. Then when he got that built, he wanted to go further in the suburbs, and we got this, he was going to, property in Warren. So he built the property in Warren, and then later on, way later, we went back to Wanda because, I guess, between that time he got promoted to the Fleetwood plant. Now, this is a big trip from Warren to Fleetwood. So, we moved back to Wanda. And like for work, they would always have a car that someone would drive, and they would pay the man weekly, you know, for driving them. And it was like a car full, and sometimes they’d change off different cars, but my dad didn’t have a car, so he depended on these drivers.

RM: Now you attended high school between what years?

DK: [pause] I think thirty, thirty-four, something like that.

RM: 1934. So then you’re living back in the city, you’re living on Wanda, around 1934.

DK: Right yeah, right.

RM: And then you got reconnect, then you were close to the Serbian community, the church and so on?

DK: Well, not to the church, but it was, you know, closer to bus stops and stuff like that.

RM: But I mean, it was that time when you were then in the city and you could go to events at Serbian Hall or someplace like that? Okay.

DK: Right, right.

RM: Alright. Then what did you do after you got done with high school?
DK: I went to work for McKee Kenyon Company, they were also on Fort Street. And it was, I don’t know, they sold paints and different things. I worked in the office. I got twelve dollars a week. That was a lot of money.

RM: So this was during the...

DK: But I didn’t like it. I hated it.

RM: And this was, what was the name of the company?

DK: McKee Kenyon.

RM: McKee, could you spell it?


RM: A paint company?

DK: Yeah.

RM: Okay, and so you worked there, and this would have been during the late-1930s?

DK: Yeah.

RM: So you went to school from what, about 1934 to ‘38?

DK: No, I think I graduated in 1935 or something like that.

RM: Okay. And then the rest of the years you worked at this paint company?

DK: Right.

RM: Then how did you meet

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

RM: Could you tell us a little about your memories. How did your family celebrate, did they celebrate any Serbian holidays? What did they do for like Christmas and Easter and so on? Could you explain a little how, what they did? Like take a particular holiday, like say Christmas.

DK: They would celebrate both the American holidays, the 25th and the 7th is Serbian, January 7th. And they’d do both. And Santa Claus was like for the 25th and a tree and all that. And my mother dressed up as Santa Claus one year. And...we didn’t know it was her, in the silhouette, and she said to us, “Give me a kiss.” You know? And I wouldn’t kiss her, my sister kissed her. And she said, “You won’t get any gifts.” And I says, “I don’t care, I am not going to kiss you.” [Chuckles] So, anyway but my mother, for being a foreigner from Yugoslavia, not even knowing the language very well. They always bought books,
a lot of books. And she taught herself how to read, and my dad was not as...she spoke English very well, you know, as the years went by. But my dad never was too interested, he didn’t speak as well. And she could read, he could not. She could read and she’d get True Story Magazine, she’d buy it, she’d read it. And on the radio, she’d do all the soap operas. And I think that’s how she learned, by just being interested.

RM: Now would part of it been she was kind of isolated living out in the suburbs that way, she didn’t have a lot of Serbian people, so she was kind of forced to learn English to interact with the Americans around her?

DK: Yes. Yes, she did. I think so.

RM: Then did they eat anything special, like at Christmastime were there any particular celebrations, Serbian celebrations?

DK: Yes, my dad used to sing in Serbian, it was like a Christmas song. And we’d sing it in the choir, you know that’s part of the tradition and everything. But I could remember, how I thought, “Gee, you sound awful. You have an awful voice.” But it’s the traditional song that you sing for Christmas. And they’d make up a big sweet dough, and I don’t know what you’d call it. Like that Italian bread that big...

RM: Panetone?

DK: That big...

RM: Some kind of a...

DK: Yeah, it’s even bigger than that.

RM: Some kind of a fruitcake or some sort?

DK: There was no fruit in it, but it was a big thing that was shaped round. And then it always had a crust, and then they all, then they would _________ - __________ put it up there. And what else would they eat? And they’d always have a roast pig.

RM: At Christmastime?

DK: That was traditional, yes. A little suckling roast pig, delicious. And I could remember Christmastime, my dad had like a Champaign glass and my sister and I put some wine in it and then he’d drop coins in it. And we were supposed to drink the wine, and that was like our gift. Got a lot of gold coins.

RM: Was that sort of like good luck, something dealing with good luck?

DK: I guess so, yeah. So you would be prosperous.

RM: And then would you go to, you wouldn’t go down to St. Lazarus Orthodox Church?

DK: No, we wouldn’t go to church because we didn’t have a car. But later years when we had a car we would.

RM: Were there any other holidays?
DK: And then, on Serbian Christmas they always had this, like a Lenten Supper at the church and everyone would go, and then like, I guess in Europe they do it at home, but we, since we all did it together at the church hall. We had this Kolač and then they’d break it and they’d pour wine on it. And that’s to signify Christ’s blood, had different meanings. But the Serbian Christmas was all very religious, there was no gifts and all that stuff. Everything was religious.

RM: So it was more centered at the church than at home?

DK: Well, there would be some things at home but a lot of it was at church.

RM: Okay. Were there any other holidays that you celebrated, Serbian holidays that you celebrated?

DK: Yeah, they celebrate Vidovdan, in fact I think it’s in June or July.

RM: June, June 28.

DK: Twenty-eighth, they celebrate a battle that they lost, isn’t that good? They always say we’re the only ones who celebrate a lost battle. But for some reason they celebrate it, I don’t really remember why. Maybe Dianne would probably know.

RM: Yeah. Well that was when they were defeated by the Turks.

DK: Yeah.

RM: Yeah. How do you spell Vidovdan?

DK: V-I-D-O-V-D-A-N.

RM: Okay. And how would they celebrate that?

DK: By having a Kolach, this big bread thing and they’d all go to the hall and have a meal, and that would be about it. They’d have the orchestra and they’d dance after.

RM: Did they have picnics in the summertime?

DK: And they’d always have a Kuma kova [SOUNDS LIKE cumin cova] and their like honored that day.

RM: And they were in charge of the day and the celebration?

DK: No they were the honored, like the guest of honor. Maybe like the guest of honor.

RM: Okay. And then in these early days there was a hall connected with St. Lazarus Church?

DK: Um-hmm, yep. It was on Frederick Street, this Russell Street community, there was a hall on Frederick, and then on Warren and Russell was the Church. It would be about maybe four blocks away, five blocks away.

RM: From the hall?

DK: From the hall.

RM: I see, okay. And the hall had kitchen facilities, a bar what was there?

DK: Yeah. Kitchen facilities, bar, a stage where they had plays, Serbian plays.
RM: Could you talk a little about that one? If you remember.

DK: Well, this is like way back. They would have people that were really good actors, and I don’t know where they got the plays from, but they’re Serbian plays. And they would speak Serbian and it was a play. If you didn’t know how to speak Serbian or understand it, you wouldn’t know what was going on. None of them were funny, you know, like comedies?

RM: Uh-huh.

DK: And you know Paul Papich, and Angela Papich. Well Paul, his father was a very good actor, of course his brother was too, Paul’s brother, Myra. He actually wanted to be an actor, that’s what he went to California for. And he was good, but I guess he wasn’t good enough.

RM: What was his father’s name who was the actor?

DK: His name was Spasa Papich. S-P-A-S-A.

RM: And then Papich is P-A-P-I-C-H.

RM: So he was one of the lead actors?

DK: Oh yeah he was good?

RM: So these were all people… the actors were all people in the Detroit Serbian community?

DK: Right.

RM: And they... do you remember... did they put them on frequently, or sporadically?

DK: I guess yearly.

RM: Something yearly.

DK: Yeah, yearly.

RM: Ah, okay.

RM: Then, could you talk a little about the... you said they got interested in the church choir, and that... the role of the church choir...

DK: Well, actually there were some Croatian girls that were like my sisters girlfriends, because they were older than I was. And they belonged to the Sokols, and it was like a club that did gymnastics. And so these were my sister’s friends, but she got married when she was 18, so they became my friends. And they belonged to the Sokols, S-O-K-O-L. And they said... they asked me to go with them, and I said “oh, ok,” and I did and then we did parallel bars, and we did different like... exercises where you had to sort of contort yourself. I liked it, and from there someone asked me to go to a concert, and I heard the choir sing and... It was just the men’s choir, and then they had the women’s choir was separate. So when I joined... and I thought that’d be nice joining a choir, because they sounded really good... and so I joined the girls’ choir, and then about a year later the two combined. So that’s how I got into the choir, I heard them sing one time and though it was pretty nice.

RM: And that was you think... what year was that?
DK: 38th and...
RM: Oh, ok.

DK: And then my husband was like, in the male choir. So when they combined, and we went to a convention or something... singing convention... and it was like in Chicago. And we had just merged and he asked me to dance, and we got along great, and started going together.
RM: Mhmm.
RM: Now, just for the record your husband’s name was?
DK: Rudy. Rudolph.
RM: Ok Dorothy, could you tell us a little of what you remember of your husband’s family, the Kordich family? Kind of their background, how they came to the United States, and the names of some of the people?
DK: They migrated in the Pittsburgh area and Rudy’s mother was born here, but his grandmother and grandfather were the ones that immigrated here.
RM: Now they lived in the... do you remember the name? Was that McKeesport?
DK: Correct. Not McKeesport it’s...
RM: McKee’s Rock?
DK: Mckee’s Rocks.
RM: Mckee’s Rocks?
DK: Yeah, right.
RM: Ok, and that’s outside of Pittsburgh?
DK: Right.
RM: Do you know what they did there?
DK They mostly worked in the steel mills.
RM: Ok. And so what was Rudy’s mother’s name?
DK: Her name was Mary.
RM: Mary, ok, and his father?
DK: Rudolph.
RM: Rudolph, he was also Rudolf, ok.
RM: Ok, and so he worked in the steel mills there?
DK: Yeah.
RM: Ok, and then how did they get to Detroit?
DK: I really don’t know. I think they got a job here or something.
RM: In the auto industry?
DK: Yeah, yup. Yup. But he died when he was young, his father.
RM: And a...
DK: And he had an uncle that was in Pittsburgh too, and he had a meat market. And Rudy would go there every summer to work in the meat market because his father was dead... and sort of got a little money... and the uncle was quite wealthy. But, when the depression came he fed everybody, you know, if you needed meat or something he gave it to you.
RM: Mhmm. Now, do you remember his name?
DK: Nicholas.
RM: Nicholas, ok.
RM: And so they came to Detroit, but had this Pittsburgh connection as well.
DK: Right.
RM: Ok, and... where did... so where did Rudolph then... the father. Where did he work when he was alive?
DK: I don’t know which... he worked for Chrysler’s. I don’t know which plant.
RM: Ok, but he worked...
DK: Because he was dead already when we were married.
RM: Uh-huh, ok.
RM: And then how did... with... how many children did they have besides Rudolph?
DK: Oh boy, four. Three boys and a girl.
RM: Ok, so that was Rudolph and Nicholas...
DK: And Martha, and Don.
RM: Don, ok.
RM: Now what did Mary do at the death of her husband?
DK: She went through Chrysler, and because he worked for Chrysler they gave her a job, and she worked on the line and supported the family. Then she retired from Chrysler.
RM: So when she went to work there, this was during the latter days of the depression? The late 1930’s?
DK: I don’t know. I know they didn’t have a hard a time with the depression. We did. My parents had a hard time, because they had the house we lived in and then they had the house that they rented, and if you had property you couldn’t go on welfare. And the people that rented the house couldn’t pay because it was the depression and they didn’t have a job. So that didn’t do us any good. But I can remember not knowing where I was going to get my next meal from. People don’t know what that is like, it kind of stays with you. But I remember the lady next door, she was on welfare and they gave us this beef in a can... a big can... and she was getting it... and my mother grew some tomatoes and vegetables in the back yard, and we were kind of trying to make do... so she... the lady wanted some tomatoes... and so they traded... my mother says “Yeah I’ll trade you for the meat you know” and she says “Oh, I’m so tired of it, yeah,” and so they traded. And we had that that beef, and it was like (laughs)... the greatest meal, but it was really hard because my dad was out of work for three years. His, all of his savings was gone. But what thing I admire, they never stole. You know, like they say “Oh, this ham fell off the truck.” You know, those Italians. And I didn’t even think of it, but I didn’t… I mean I didn’t know that you did that. I mean it just... and my dad, he wouldn’t take anything... you know. So we were having potatoes and some watered down sauce on top of it, and then things got better. And then, like the plants... the people in the office’s that were calling the men back, they’d call you back, but you had to pay them to call you back. Of course, the company didn’t know that, and my dad didn’t have any money to buy... you know... his way back in. And he really had to wait a long time until they got to him.

RM: Now what were some of the... I think you mentioned one time some of the things you ate, besides the potatoes. Did you have any bread?

DK: We had those... Do you know what leaf lard is? It’s a big hunk of lard, and they cut it up and render all of the grease out of it, and it gets a little crispy, but they’re still 100 percent fat. I mean it is greasy. We ate that. My dad would buy a bag full. He’d go like to Russell Street, where they had packing houses, and they’d sell that. And he’d bring it home, I thought it tasted great. It’s like baked.

RM: Uh-huh.

RM: And you’d put that on the bread?

DK: Maybe just take some bread and eat it with it.

RM: Oh, ok.

RM: Did you ever bring this to school as a sandwich?

DK: (laughs)

DK: Yeah, I did, because there was nothing else.

RM: So it was what you grew in the garden mostly, and some of these things that you could get.

DK: Like they could buy potatoes. I guess they were cheap.

RM: Yeah. Ok, and the Kordichs were, the Kordichs were... and they lived in Detroit, the Kordichs?

DK: Yeah, uh-huh.

RM: Ok.
RM: Now, how did you meet your husband? We talked a little about that.

DK: I met him in the choir.

RM: The choir, ok, and then you got married in what year?

DK: 1941.

RM: 1941, ok.

RM: And then... your daughter... Diane was born in?

DK: 1942.

RM: And then what happened with the war and your husband?

DK: Well, they were... the... what do you call it? Where they call you. Drafted.

RM: Drafted, it’s drafted, yeah.

DK: He wasn’t drafted. At I wasn’t very hurt at the time. He wasn’t drafted and he was working at Chrysler, and I guess the men talk... and they got him... I think this is what happened... they got him thinking if he didn’t enlist they would draft him, and he would be in the infantry. And didn’t want to be in the infantry. And he had a six-month-old baby, and I don’t think he would have ever been drafted with a six-month-old baby. But anyway, he enlisted, and I was... I did not show him that I didn’t like it. I never said a thing to him. He never knew that I was so hurt thinking like he left us. But anyway, he went into the air corps and he want to be a pilot. And he did go through a lot of training. He went to Davidson College in North Carolina and he got through most of the training to be a pilot, and then there was this altitude test for your reflexes, and he didn’t pass it. And he was major upset about that, because he had his... he really wanted to be a pilot. So then he became a crew chief, and I guessed they fixed the wings. So he did that.

RM: But then he served... where did he serve during the war?

DK: In Tinian.

RM: Tinian?

DK: Yes.

RM: South Pacific.

DK: Yup.

RM: Now, what did you do during the war, with your husband gone and a little girl?

DK: I had the little girl and I had a hard time. But, I feel very close to Diane because we were like, together. Anyways, I stayed at my mother-in-law’s, because that’s where we lived, upstairs, we lived in two rooms upstairs while we were married before he went to... before he enlisted. So anyway, I lived there, but my mother-in-law worked. There was no one to care for Diane. But the grandmother lived in the home. She didn’t live there permanently but she would be there like a lot of the time. So this was during a period where she was living with her.
RM: So this is your grandmother?

DK: No, this is Rudy’s grandmother, and she’s like, old.

RM: And her name was?

DK: 70’s, I don’t remember.

RM: Ok, so she was in her 70’s?

DK: Yeah, late 70’s. So anyway, my mother-in-law, she... well first, I didn’t work in the war plants. First I worked for J.L. Hudson’s as a sales clerk. And then I hadn’t seen my husband in a while, like eight or nine months, he was in Davidson, North Carolina... they had like some days off, and so I worked long enough to get money to go on a bus to be with him. So I did that. I got this job and saved enough money, because everywhere where I stayed was my parents, I paid board. So, I got enough money, got on the bus, and Rudy got me a room with a school teacher. She had an extra room and she was going to rent it out to me. And I went down there, and I think I stayed a week because I couldn’t stay any longer. And I wasn’t having... I was just having lunch... and I couldn’t even afford to buy myself a lunch. And many days I really didn’t have anything to eat, and my husband didn’t know about it. And somehow it came up, and he said “Oh my god! That’s terrible.” But, I don’t know what happened then, and I stayed a week, and I came home and then I went to apply for a job where my dad worked, at Fleetwood. They had converted the automobile plant to making parts for a B-29. So I was inspector of... I inspected the weld on the manifold that goes on the B-29. That’s what I did and I got $1.29 which was fantastic money.

RM: An hour? $1.29 an hour?

DK: Yeah. That was unheard of (laughs). But anyway, that’s what I did all through the war, and trying to take care of this child. And so then, I don’t know, the grandmother got sick and I couldn’t stay at my mother-in-law’s, and I had to go home to my mother’s and dad’s. So, my brother-in-law took our crib and everything... we just had the crib to take... and we went over to my mother’s and... I can’t tell this story.

RM: Ok. And then... so anyway, then you lived with your mother the rest of the time.

DK: Well yeah, it wasn’t pleasant.

RM: And then the end of the war came

DK: And then one... after about two years I... Rudy was going to... of course... he had a leave or whatever you call it, and he could go to Chicago. So we were going to meet in Chicago, and... because it wasn’t too far so, and I took Diane with me. It’s hard to talk about this.

RM: And he went... you know I hadn’t seen him for two years and he didn’t know I was bringing her. So we met in the USO, and was Diane like... of course she wasn’t right with me when he saw me... and of course he hugged me and kissed me... and that didn’t go over with her, because she didn’t know who this guy is. She was crying and the whole thing was a disaster.

[END OF TAPE]