Interview with Pauline Mooney (M)

Conducted by Brooke Templin (T)

At Wesbury Retirement Community

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45 minutes and 6 seconds

T: Alright um I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me tonight and you had mentioned that you had remembered a great deal about the 1930s, so please go into as much detail as you see fit. Um, for the record, could you please state your full name?

M: My name is Pauline W. Mooney: M-O-O-N-E-Y.

T: Mrs. Mooney, when and where were you born?

M: I was born in 1919 in Forest County, Pennsylvania.

T: And what was the name of the town that you were born in?

M: Endeavor.

T: Endeavor. How would you describe your town growing up in the 1930s? As in like, was it a large town; was it a small rural community or…what? How would you say?

M: It was a small lumber town. There were-there was, um, a lot of timber in the area and so a lot of men worked in the woods and cut trees and my uh, my father was head of a large company that was in the county.

T: Would you say it was a well-off community or-?

M: No.

T: Not well off.

M: No, no, not at all. People were very poor and they worked for the lumber company and they weren’t paid very well, so… (chuckles)

T: What was the community atmosphere like? Did it feel welcoming at all, or was it kind of like everybody kept to themselves more of?

M: No, I think everybody knew everybody else’s business, so it was that sort of thing (both chuckle) And if you did something you shouldn’t do everybody in town knew it so it was all over haha.

T: Did you think that the atmosphere changed at all during the Depression or did it change because uh, because like people were poor, did that affect the way they treated others in the community?

M: I don’t think so, because they were all in the same situation and each of them knew that other…they knew that people that owned the lumber company were quite well off, and they had a beautiful home, and they had servants, and so they were held in awe by the people that lived there and worked in the woods to make, to get a living.

T: Mmhmm.

M: So it was two different lifestyles, extremely different. The owners, uh, didn’t spend a whole lot of time there. Usually they came in the summer and then in the winter they went to their homes in New York State.

T: Did the owners of the business associate with the people in the town at all?

M: No.

T: They kind of kept to themselves?

M: Mmhmm. Mmhmm, yeah.

T: What did the people in town think of them? Like you said they were in awe of them; were they jealous, was there a lot of jealousy?

M: No, I think “they were in awe” would be the best description. I don’t think they ever had any…they never thought they[[1]](#footnote-1) would associate with any of them. They were the workers and they should know their place. (laughs)

T: Um…what was, what was your house like i0n terms of was it large, was it newly built, or had it been in your family for a while?

M: It was an older house and it was six rooms, three bedrooms upstairs and three rooms downstairs with a bathroom, which by the way was not in every house. Some places had outhouses so haha.

T: So it was more of like a luxury to have one in the house?

M: Mmhmm, yeah, I think that at that point it was.

T: Did you have a large yard or were you close to neighbors?

M: Yes, No, we had a large yard and we had- my dad had a good job and we had some money so we had somebody come out to mow the lawn…uh huh.

T: Um, did he ever hire people for any other jobs around the house, like did you have domestic servants at all?

M: Yes, we did because my mother died when I was little so we had to hire somebody to do the housework and get our meals.

T: Ok. Um, could you briefly name and describe all of the members in your immediate family? (pause) Or maybe just name the members in your immediate family that you grew up with?

M: Well, I was an accident (chuckles) let’s put it that way and uh, the youngest of my, uh, sisters was ten years older than I so I—the family had five people and the family grew as a group, and then I came along ten years later and I was pretty much by myself. And my mother died when I was nine. So it was just my dad and me.

T: Just you and your dad growing up?

M: Mmhmm.

T: Um, so you said that your mother passed away when you were nine. If it’s ok with my asking, how did she die?

M: She had cancer, and nobody knew what was wrong with her. They took her to the hospital, Warren General Hospital, and operated and found nothing. And a new doctor came to town and he checked with her and he said, “She has cancer.” And none of us had ever heard that word before.

T: Really?

M: Mmhmm.

T: What did you, what was your reaction when you found out, when you were told that?

M: Well, we were just, kind of, standing back and trying to figure out what “cancer” was because we had never heard the term before and uh…um…I’m sure the other doctors reacted the same way; it was a learning experience for them as well so cancer was being discovered.

T: Um, what affect did your mother passing have on you personally?

M: (Pause) Well, I don’t know, I don’t think I realized the depth of it at that time. I was nine, and I had older sisters, all of whom were gone – most of them lived in Cleveland – and uh, so it was just my dad and me, uh, of course I knew she was gone, but we had what we called a housekeeper who came every day and who took care of the place and got our meals.

T: Did you notice any, uh, change in your father? I mean, I guess you were young at the time, but did you, like after your mother passed, see him change at all?

M: I think he was quieter and unhappy…but uh, he took awfully good care of me and was awfully good to me so we got along well.

T: Mmhmm. Um, so you said that you had a housekeeper who would come in?

M: Yes.

T: What, what types of stuff would she do around the house?

M: She would dust the furniture and run the sweeper and clean the bathroom and uh, sweep the front porch and the sidewalks and get our meals.

T: So she was in charge of cooking?

M: Mmhmm.

T: How long did she stay with your family?

M: The most one stayed was about two years. We had constant change of people who were uh there…

T: Why was that? Why did you keep changing housekeepers, I mean?

M: Well, sometimes they didn’t do well and my father had to ask them to leave and sometimes they weren’t all that happy there, so…we did have one or two that were very good.

T: Was it people from your town, or was it outsiders, or immigrants, or…?

M: Well, we did have one woman come from Warren, Pennsylvania, which was probably thirty miles away but most of them were local in our little town, our little lumber town.

T: Ok, so you didn’t have to look very far for help?

M: No. Uh uh.

T: Um, when did- so when did you stop having housekeepers? Was there a point when you were old enough to take care of the housekeeping?

M: No. Um…(pause) I graduated from high school and then went to um, a business school. Um, I enrolled at Allegheny and uh…I’m not sure why I decided not to stay and I called my father and he came and got me. He said, “Well you have to go to school someplace.” And so I chose to go to a business school and I got my degree at Allegheny later.

T: So you were originally going to go to Allegheny College and you don’t remember what the reason was for not sticking with it?

M: (pause) I think I had a problem deciding what about my major and I think I went to Allegheny with the impression that I could stay two years and they said, “No, no, no. You have to stay *four* years.” And so I called my father and told him that and I said, “I think I’d better come home,” and he came and got me and took me home. And so I went to a business school for two years.

T: What was the importance for you to only go for two years? Why was four years- ?

M: I, I don’t know. I can’t- I don’t- I just can’t tell you. I was a good student so it wasn’t a matter of uh, not being able to do the work. I think probably, I was a little scared of the whole situation and wanted to go back home. I wanted- I know lots of Allegheny freshmen go through that so…(chuckles)

T: Yeah, the freshman blues.

M: Uh huh, uh huh.

T: Um, what had you wanted to be when you were little, when you grew up?

M: Well, my sisters had all grown up and gone away and worked in offices, so that was probably what I had in mind. I had one teacher- one sister- that taught school and I knew I didn’t want to teach school so I worked in offices after I graduated.

T: So you always had that general idea that that’s where you wanted to go?

M: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

T: Ok, um, where did you go to school as a kid? Like high school and your grammar school I guess?

M: It was called Hickory Township High School, or Hickory Township School, and then high school all in one building because at that time not many kids went to school. A lot of kids stayed away and worked.

T: So how big was your class in high school?

M: Well my graduating class was eighteen.

T: And how many kids would you have estimated were in the town? Like a couple hundred or-?

M: I would say forty or so started as freshmen and then dropped away to the point where we had eighteen as seniors.

T: Wow. How, how would you describe your school? I mean, so your class was really small, was that typical to have really small classes?

M: Yes, but we were very fortunate because it was the time of the Depression and teachers were fighting hard, having a hard time finding a job so we lucked out because they would take any teaching job and we had some awfully good teachers.

T: Really?

M: From Pittsburgh and Cleveland and a little more sophisticated than we would have had otherwise.

T: So you think that if the Depression had not created this, you know, surplus of teachers, you probably wouldn’t have gotten good teachers?

M: Absolutely. I remember our, our History teacher had a graduate degree from Duke and our English teacher had a degree from Allegheny, and uh one from Youngstown had a degree from a school in Youngstown but they all had something. They had high school and a little bit of college; they all had a college degree. So we were fortunate there.

T: Did you um, participate in any school activities? (pause) I mean that as a young woman in the 1930s you didn’t really have sports like we do nowadays…

M: I played basketball for six years.

T: You played basketball?

M: Yeah, I was on the, on the team.

T: Oh, ok.

M: Uh huh, I liked that…

T: You enjoyed basketball?

M: Oh my, yes. I loved it (chuckles).

T: Would you have said that you were really good?

M: No, I don’t think so (laughs). I could have been a lot better! But I was always- I was on the first team because they were short of students, so uh, they had to put up with me (laughs). I have to be honest about it.

T: Nice…um, did your teachers ever talk, or did they ever give classes or lectures about what was happening in the country during the Depression? Or did you ever have discussions about New Deal programs that were happening…because you were in high school, like, right? So did you have any politics or civic classes where you talked about that kind of stuff?

M: Mmhmm, mmhmm, we did. We had a civics class and History and English and Math and you know, the standard.

T: Did you discuss FDR’s policies a lot in class or…?

M: (pause) The, the…

T: The policy with the New Deal…and what Congress was doing…?

M: Sure we did. Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yes, we did. Uh huh.

T: Um…do you think that your teachers were- that they told enough about what was going on or did you kind of have to figure out like what was happening with the Depression from other sources…if you know what I mean?

M: Well, as I mentioned, my father had a job and so we felt, or I felt, and still feel, that we were very fortunate then because we had some money coming in. Uh, for the most part if you made- if you were a father of a family that had two to four children and you made $85 dollars a month, you were way ahead of everybody else. So, I know that sounds ridiculous, but that’s the way it was.

T: Do you know what your father’s salary was? Was it more than that?

M: Yes, yes, he made $225 dollars a month so…uh huh.

T: Wow, so definitely above the average?

M: Oh yeah. But there were three of them that had jobs like his and the Depression forced the company to let two of them go and left him with the responsibility of three people.

T: Um what affect did that have on him? Did he feel any like guilt about having a job when two were let go and did that increase his workload a lot?

M: But I think that he felt very fortunate that he had a job and he had a car, he had a new car every year and he drove all over the county and visited worksites and checked on the workers and made sure they were doing their jobs properly.

T: Do you think his job put a lot of stress on him? Or a lot of strain?

M: No…I think he was used to it. He was a pretty tough guy haha.

T: Did he ever speak of any financial problems with you or did he kind of keep that area of his life separate?

M: I never felt that we were short of money at all, I was never made to feel that way, I was…and as I say he bought me a car when I was sixteen so I, I would, I used- when we had after school activities and I drove everybody home. And so that was nice for them and I was glad to do it so…haha.

T: So were you the only one in your high school that had a car?

M: Oh my, yes. (chuckles)

T: Really?

M: Oh my, yes. Uh huh. Yep, by far.

T: Were you hit up a lot for rides?

M: Well, anybody who could- was a friend of mine could make use of my car, were happy of course and they couldn’t help it.

T: Did you take advantage of that and drive maybe like past or out of the county to go on road trips or anything like that? Were you able to do that?

M: Basketball, but uh, I was a good driver. I have to be honest and say that. I was very serious about driving and never ever did anything foolish in the car. Never (chuckles).

T: That’s good.

M: I just didn’t do that.

T: (pause) Um at what point in time were you aware that the country was in a Depression? Uh, do you recall?

M: I don’t really; I don’t think we ever knew we were deprived. We weren’t made to feel that way.

T: Was there a specific moment when you realized the severity of other peoples’ situations? Like you mention that you had a little bit of poverty in your town that wasn’t very well off. Were you aware of the disparity in uh people’s situations?

M: Uh, I just accepted it as it was- I don’t think I ever questioned it until much later when I thought back and realized that I had been better off than most.

T: Do you recall any experiences where you came face to face with like a friend maybe who wasn’t as well off and you thought like, “Wow, I’m very lucky?”

M: Yeah, yes my best friend didn’t have the resources that I had. She, uh, her mother had divorced and the two of them were alone and there wasn’t much money.

T: Did her mom have a hard time finding work being a single mother?

M: No, she had a nice job with the lumber company. She was the secretary for some of the men in the lumber company. So they had money coming in, but not much. None of us knew that so (chuckles) we didn’t know we were poor, so…

T: What, what was it that she didn’t have that you did? I mean, aside from I guess the obvious, a car, what else was noticeable that she lacked?

M: (Pause) I don’t think there were many differences because her mother did have a paying job and they had a little bit of money and so they did quite well.

T: Were you friends with anyone who was maybe worse off than that?

M: Oh sure. Most of my friends didn’t have much of anything.

T: Can you talk more about that? What do you mean by “not much of anything”? What did they have and what didn’t they have?

M: Well I think I told you, didn’t I, about the dinner when I, I- one of my best friends asked me to come to their house for dinner.

T: Oh, yeah. Could you share that story for the record?

M: Mmhmm, mmhmm. And our dinner consisted of uh, boiled potatoes, and butter, and we mashed the boiled potatoes with our forks and put butter on there. And then they had also chopped up some onion, and we spread the onion over the potato, the mashed potato that we had mashed with our forks, and then with homemade bread. That was our meal.

T: So mashed potatoes, bread, and onions. And that was it. And did she apologize to you for that or was that just her standard meal?

M: No, no, that was a standard meal, no. Now, my dad and I always had meat for the meal, you know the main course of the meal but a lot of people just couldn’t afford meat. So they bought what they could, and they all had gardens so they canned, the women canned, everything they could from the garden to see them through the winter.

T: What was some typical food that was canned?

M: Well, they canned corn and uh, and we had – my dad and I – had a building, that was made of wood and the walls were this far apart[[2]](#footnote-2) and those walls were filled with sawdust. And that sawdust protected the interior from the elements. It never got real cold or real hot in that building.

T: So like a storage unit, kind of thing?

M: It was. It was a strange thing that I’ve never heard of since but (laughs) that’s how we survived. And we kept our potatoes that were grown in the garden in bushel baskets that were sitting on the floor in that room and they never- they lasted all winter because the temperature stayed the same. So…

T: Who was in charge of keeping the garden, in your family?

M: (pause) I think, I think my dad and I worked that out between us. Um, and we always had a housekeeper, did I mention that? Yeah? Ok.

T: Yep. So did the housekeeper help outside with the garden as well?

M: Yes, she did anything she was asked to do because she was glad to have a job! (chuckles) Huh, oh dear.

T: Right, yeah. What were some- you said that you changed housekeepers a lot – what were some of the reasons? That, like you said, they didn’t do their job well, for a lack of understanding what their job was or did they just not…I mean, did they not try or…? (pause) What were some of the main reasons you let people go from being a housekeeper?

M: Well…some of them, I remember one of them in particular, was cranky and not very happy and my dad didn’t like having her around and so he asked her to leave. But, uh, and sometimes he and I managed by ourselves…but uh, and we did have the one woman who was marvelous and she did enjoy being there and did a wonderful job and she stayed two or three years.

T: Where was she from?

M: She was from Warren Pennsylvania.

T: Ok. Um, since you- since your mother died at a young age, was there another woman in your life who sort of filled in as the mother figure for you? Or a female role model that you looked up to?

M: Yes, very much so. When I went to a school – after I graduated from high school I went to a school in Warren, Pennsylvania, and I lived with her.

T: Was this the business school that you went to?

M: Yes.

T: Ok.

M: And I lived with her because they didn’t have dorms there, and so I lived with her; had a bedroom there and did my schoolwork in my bedroom and had dinner, lunch and dinner, with her in the dining room. And uh, we got along fine.

T: Was she a lot older than you? Did she have her own family?

M: Mmhmm. She was in her forties and had a son who was older than I was.

T: Did her husband live with her or what happened -?

M: Yes. He did. Mmhmm.

T: Why do you think you looked up to her? Like, why was she a role model for you?

M: Because she was very kind, and very understanding, and uh didn’t find fault with me at all. She thought everything I did was fine, and uh…

T: So very encouraging?

M: Yes. She was a lovely person. I stayed friends with her until she died a good many years later. I went to see her every weekend because I cared so much for her (chuckles).

T: What was her experience during the Depression? Did she struggle? Financially, I mean.

M: This woman, that I-?

T: Yeah.

M: Well that was one reason she had people like me because we paid to live there and she had several bedrooms on second floor- I think five – and they were rented out to men who were in the area. And they were uh, able to pay her whatever the price was – I don’t remember.

T: So there were men living in the house as well?

M: Yes, the second floor. They didn’t have meals with us. They must have gone to restaurants or something, I don’t know what they did, but…and the house was separated. When you walked in, you walked in up the stairs to the second floor or you walked straight back to the house where she and I lived. So they really were two separate buildings in a sense that were connected but separate. And uh I lived in her part of the house.

T: (pause) Um, how would you describe your relationship with your father, since you did live alone- I mean it was just the two of you- would you have said that you were very close? Very open, talk about a lot of stuff, or what would you say?

M: Well he was pretty silent. I think he was a little overwhelmed most of the time with this girl (both laugh) that he had to take care of and he didn’t know what to do with me. And so there was some of that but he was very, very kind and very good to me. He always gave me plenty of money, I had more spending money than anybody else and I had a car, of course, he bought me my car haha.

T: Right, that’s always nice.

M: I guess I was spoiled! (chuckles) What we called then a “spoiled kid” so…

T: But was it hard to talk to him about some things? Was there a friend’s mom maybe that you liked to confide in?

M: Mmhmm. My best friend, uh her mother. I always went to her when I had a problem so it worked out ok.

T: Yeah. What do you (cough) you’ve mentioned that this best friend…uh, what qualities or personality traits made you guys so compatible with each other?

M: Well, we were both very good in school and so we enjoyed studying together and talking about the courses we were taking and uh trying to stay very good in school! (laughs) We wanted to be the best students and we were. In all honesty, we did very well, so…valedictorian and salutatorian.

T: Wait, which one were you?

M: Valedictorian, uh huh.

T: Wow, congratulations.

M: (laughs)

T: That’s quite a feat. (pause) Um, what did you do in your free time outside of school?

M: Well, I played basketball and when we went on trips that took a lot of time you know. We had to leave late in the afternoon, and we had to travel to the school that we were competing with and do our basketball game and then get in the car, and drive home. So we got home pretty late because basketball games ran from 7/7:30 to 10. So we didn’t get home very early either.

T: What about during the summer when you were off from school?

M: No, it was during the winter when we had studies too. People that were on teams, the guys were on a basketball team too, and they were a very good team. We didn’t have a very good team (laughs) but uh, um we enjoyed playing so we stayed with it. But…uh the guys really did have a good team. Somehow, we never managed.

T: Was there any other activities you enjoyed aside from basketball?

M: (pause) Hmm…I’d have to think about that…I know that I was awfully busy, but I can’t remember…well, of course I had a boyfriend, you know so that took some time haha seeing him…and he had a car which was unusual. So uh but we had parties and dances and uh we were always busy. So…

T: Um did your family own a radio?

M: Yes, uh huh, we did have a radio.

T: How often would you listen to it?

M: Not very much, as I recall.

T: Ok. Did you ever listen to FDR’s “Fireside Chats”? Do you remember?

M: (pause) Trying to think where I was when FDR…I lived in Minneapolis a couple of years, and I was of course out of the state of Pennsylvania at that time but um…I can’t remember if I…(long pause)

T: Nothing, not to important of a memory?

M: Not that I can remember.

T: Ok, well what was the main thing you would listen to on the radio?

M: Music.

T: Just music? Any shows or anything that they had?

M: I don’t, I don’t remember.

T: Ok.

M: I don’t remember that.

T: Um…so you, correct me if I’m wrong, you were able to vote for the first time in the presidential election of 1940, right? That would have been the first time you could have voted…

M: I remember I was- I voted for the first time when I was living in Minneapolis.

T: Ok, do you remember who you voted for? Was that for the presidential election?

M: It has to, it had to be yeah. I’m sure it was.

T: Do you remember who you voted for, and why?

M: I probably voted for the Republican because I registered as a Republican. And I didn’t vote Republican the rest of my life because I began to favor the Democrats, but that didn’t matter because it only mattered in the uh primaries. And then in the general election I could vote Democratic even though I was a registered Republican so after a point it didn’t matter what my registration was.

T: So do you remember voting for President Roosevelt?

M: Mmhmm, I did.

T: Do you- do you know why? Like what was your main reasoning for that?

M: Well I didn’t tell my father I voted for him because he haha wouldn’t have liked that. But um…I just felt that he was needed. We needed a big change and try to get things turned around because the Depression was very serious and not pleasant at all and we needed to break away from that. But World War II did that for us because men went away to serve in the army and uh took men away. We didn’t have any men when I was in my early twenties, they were all gone; totally.

T: Were you married at that time?

M: No, uh uh.

T: So you didn’t meet him until after the war?

M: He was in the service for four years, yeah. And we got married when he came back.

T: Well, you mentioned that your father didn’t like President Roosevelt? Why?

M: He was a Democrat! (laughs) Just that simple!

T: That simple: he was a Democrat, and he was a Republican.

M: Uh huh, yeah. (chuckles)

T: Um why did you stray from your father’s political philosophy? What made you decide to vote Democratic?

M: (pause) Well, I probably thought a lot about the candidates and decided I would rather go in the direction of the Democratic Party. I think that must have done it. The Republicans were very conservative. And of course I was young and wanted to move along and do things that weren’t conservative so…

T: Has that changed since then? Do you still vote democratic?

M: Mmhmm, mmhmm. I still do. Unless for some reason, once in a while I know the Republican candidate very well, a friend of mine, and that situation of course I’d vote for them but uh...Tom Ridge I always voted for and he’s a Republican, do you know who he is?

T: He’s local, right?

M: Pardon me?

T: Is he a local candidate?

M: He’s up in Erie…and uh…

T: The name sounds familiar.

M: Well he’s in Washington D.C. now, has been for years, but Tom Ridge was a very important name when I was young.

T: Ok, wait, was he a friend of yours?

M: Oh, I think so. I think so. He and I had a friendship at one time, I don’t know if he would know who I am now but at that time we were friends.

T: Ok, um (pause) was there anything – like you said your family was very well off and you didn’t feel the Depression at all – but do you remember anything that you really wanted to do as a kid or was there something you really wanted to have but couldn’t for financial reasons?

M: I don’t know if it was for financial reasons, but my dad wouldn’t let me have a bicycle, and all my friends had bicycles. So, I didn’t like that at all.

T: Why wouldn’t he let you have a bicycle?

M: He was afraid that somebody would hit me with a car. He was very protective of me and (chuckles) so I never got a bike and I still remember that…

T: But nothing for any financial reasons that you weren’t able to?

M: No, uh uh. I don’t know that I asked for a whole lot either, but I had a car, as you know, and that took some money.

T: Um…how old were you when you got your first job? Was it after business school, or did you work during high school at all?

M: No, I didn’t work until I got a job; I was almost 20.

T: Ok, did you think it was difficult to find a job? Like as a young woman?

M: Yeah, I wouldn’t have gotten that job if my dad hadn’t been friendly with the political situation at that time. And I got a political job with the Highway Department, so…that helped me.

T: So your father knew people who worked there? Is that how that happened?

M: Mmhmm, yeah. And he knew the politicians. They were the ones that found the jobs and gave them out (laughs). It was a political thing.

T: Do you- how did your father come into contact with these political and influential people? Through work or…?

M: I think he formed friendships for that reason and others. He was popular and enjoyed people and that was his world.

T: Was he active in the community at all? Um, did he participate in any community-?

M: I don’t think so. I think he was pretty much his own guy in his own way…

T: Made friends easily?

M: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

T: Ok…um what did your family do to celebrate Christmas? (pause) Do you- like did you have extended family in the area that came over to your house? Or did you travel somewhere?

M: Well, I’m trying to think because we didn’t have any family there, they were all gone- they had all gone to Cleveland, had jobs and worked there. So…but he and I had a Christmas tree and some of the family would come home for Christmas.

T: Some of your family as in like your older siblings?

M: Mmhmm.

T: Um, what did you eat for Christmas? Did you have a big meal, or especially during the Depression did you have to cut back at all or…?

M: No we didn’t, and uh we had a little uh grocery store in the town and uh we went and bought whatever we wanted every day. And the man that owned the grocery store wrote everything down and then at the end, at the 10th of every month, my dad went and paid the grocery bill. And the man that owned the store gave him a sack of candy. It was a reward haha for coming to pay his bill. We always had that little sack of candy every month, so that was a treat. Different life.

T: Uh huh. You don’t usually get free candy for paying bills nowadays.

M: Nope.

T: What about like gift giving during Christmas? Did you keep it simple or do you remember it being a very extravagant affair?

M: Well we exchanged gifts and my sisters, my older sisters, were all working and bought gifts and brought them home. And my dad always saw to it that I would go to Warren, Pennsylvania and do some shopping so I got things there…and there was nothing in our little lumber town (laughs).

T: Nothing even in Forest County, you had to go to a separate county?

M: Mmhmm, yeah. I went to Warren, Pennsylvania. It was a pretty little town…ever been there?

T: I haven’t no.

M: Well, it’s pretty. It’s pretty as can be. It’s a lovely little town but…

T: Um what about other holidays like Thanksgiving or Easter? What would your family do for that?

M: We did uh what everybody else did. We had…uh a nice Thanksgiving meal and something for Christmas and Easter, we had special meals.

T: Do you remember a favorite birthday that you had? (pause) Like, did you have big birthday celebrations with all your friends or anything?

M: I don’t think so…I don’t remember that we did. It was very common to have a birthday cake then and I don’t remember- I suppose my girlfriend’s mother saw to it that that happened. So…

T: You mean like a birthday for you?

M: Yeah, because she had a mother and I had a father and so haha each of us had just one parent.

T: Do you think that made your friendship stronger since you could understand each other’s situation?

M: Oh yeah, sure.

T: Did the fact that you had- maybe I already asked this- but did the fact that were well off and your friends weren’t, did that ever put a strain on any relationships?

M: I don’t think so. I think people were very accepting of the fact that most everybody was having a hard time. So…I don’t think they dwelled on that, people pretty much accepted that that’s the way it was and uh lived with it. I don’t remember anyone complaining bitterly they were poor or anything. So…they accepted the way things were and went from there (chuckles).

T: Did you go to church as a child?

M: Yes, I taught Sunday school when I was in my late teens and early twenties.

T: What church, or what denomination, were you?

M: Presbyterian.

T: Um how often would you go to church?

M: Every Sunday because I taught Sunday school and then I’d go to church.

T: Do you think you did that because it was the norm, or was there another reason that compelled you to go to church?

M: I don’t know, I guess I was probably flattered that they asked me to do it haha, to teach, and I enjoyed teaching the kids. I liked the kids. I had probably 12 or 15.

T: And was that the same growing up, you’d go to church every Sunday?

M: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

T: Would your father go with you?

M: No.

T: Your father didn’t go to church?

M: No.

T: Why was that?

M: I don’t know. He just wouldn’t go. He went once and said that was it. So…

T: So would you go with anybody or just by yourself?

M: No, I would go by myself. It was a small town, I knew everybody and everybody knew me so…

T: So that wasn’t a big deal at all.

M: Mm, no.

T: (pause) Um ok, let me just check the time. (pause) Um…what - so you said that you had a friend who was poorer and she ate just like mashed potatoes and stuff, what were your typical meals like?

M: Well, my dad, as I mentioned before, was well-off financially and so we always had meat uh and potatoes and a vegetable and some dessert. I made pies at an early age and cookies. I did quite a little bit of the cooking, I had to do all of the cooking when we were between housekeepers! So, I did some.

T: Who did you learn how to cook from?

M: I think I learned from me, I don’t think I had anyone teach me much of anything. I had sisters but one lived in Minneapolis, and one in North Carolina, and one in Cleveland, so they were spread out.

T: So it was sort of like a trial and error with that?

M: Yeah, mmhmm.

T: How well do you think you succeeded at cooking?

M: After a while, I think I did fairly well but it must have been awful for a while. (Both laugh)

T: Did your father ever complain or was he supportive?

M: No, he was glad that- he helped me make a stew one time and we had it for three days in a row and I can remember him commenting on it and, “We’re gonna have stew for the rest of our lives!” And somehow we managed.

T: Why was it that you had stew for three days in a row? Did you just make too much?

M: Mmhmm, yeah. That was it. (chuckles) So it was Depression, we had to eat everything in sight so we didn’t spend too much money.

T: Do you remember eating a lot of leftovers as a child? If you didn’t finish it one day you’d always finish it the next kind of thing?

M: We usually had fresh food everyday and we had a variety of food so…we weren’t stuck with the same thing all the time.

T: (Pause) Nice, nice. (Pause) Um, well I think that’s actually everything that I wanted to cover with you. You’ve been very, very helpful.

M: Why, thank you!

T: Yes, I think I have a lot of really, really good information here and it was very enlightening!

M: Uh huh. So you turn this into a professor?

T: Yeah, so I’m just going to uh stop the recorder!

Recording total time was 45 minutes.

1. The first “they” refers to the company owners and “them” refers to the workers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pauline indicated approximately two feet with her hands. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)