

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH: HARRIET BARGER

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PLACE: CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

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INTERVIEW TOPICS  
CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- When were you born? Where?
- How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
- What are your parents' names?
- Where did you go to school?
- Are you married or single?
- Did you raise a family? How big?
- What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

- Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- Trolleys (the Interurban)
- Horses and First Automobiles
- Mud roads and the seedling mile
- Hunter Airport and the first planes
- Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

- Newspapers
- Radios
- Advertising
- Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

- Motion Pictures
- Cedar Rapids Parks
- Dances
- Carnival Week
- Chautauqua
- Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- Symphony Orchestra
- Circus
- Greene's Opera House
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)

2. Famous Characters

- Cherry Sisters
- Grant Wood
- Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- Marvin Cone

3. Lifestyle

- Life before air conditioning
- Winter Activities
- Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- Clothing
- Toys
- Saloons/Taverns
- Farm Life

4. Family Life

- Household Help
- Women's Roles
- Childrens' Activities/Behavior
- Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- Indians
- Segregation of Blacks
- Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

- Cedar Rapids Schools
- Coe College
- Mount Mercy College
- Cornell College

2. Government

- City Services
- Streets/Roads
- Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)

3. Medical

- Hospitals
- Patient-Doctor Relationship
- Broken Bones
- Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
- House Calls
- Home Delivery of Babies

4. Business and Economy

- Local Factories (Douglas Starch Works, Quaker Oats, etc.)
- Local Brewing Companies
- Retail Businesses /Department Stores
- Professions
- Banking and Finance
- Restaurants (Greek Restaurants in 30's)
- Businesses that no longer exist (old groceries, drygoods, icehouses)
- Farmers Market
- Mills on Cedar River
- Buildings Erected
- Manual Labor/Types of Jobs
- Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)

5. Attitudes/Values

- Children/Discipline
- Sex/Petting
- Charity
- Divorce
- Work
- Working women, Voting Rights for Women
- Patriotism (World War I)

D. Historic Events in and Outside the Community

1. Catastrophic Events

- Clifton Hotel Fire (1903)
- Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
- Bank Closings (1933)
- Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
- Public Library Murder(1921)

2. National Historic Events

- Womens' Suffrage
- World War I
- Roaring 20's
- Prohibition
- Great Depression



Mrs. Harriet Barger was born in Cedar Rapids in 1902, the daughter of John and Ellen Gilfeather. She grew up in the Time Check neighborhood and attended St. Patrick's School. When she was fifteen, she went to work in the Quaker Oats factory, and worked there for about seven years. She married Harris Barger at the age of 22 and they raised four boys in the same house that she grew up in. To help out with expenses, she went to work at the Roosevelt Hotel in the check room and later at the Holiday Inn on Williams Boulevard. Her memories include Quaker Oats, life along the river, and movies and theaters.

RK: She was born in Cedar Rapids and has lived here all her life. I'm about to interview Harriet. Harriet was born in 1902 and has, I don't know how many children yet, but she has 20 grandchildren.

HB: Four.

RK: You have four children?

HB: Four boys.

RK: So we're going to start way back when she's living in Time Check, and I want to know something about why it's called Time Check. Can you tell me, Harriet?

HB: I have a fairly good idea. It seemed like a--when we moved over here it seemed like when they got paid--they got paid by the day, the time and night. They got it by check. I don't know. That's about all I know.

RK: Would it be they didn't have the money so they gave a check and said your...

HB: Your slip of paper, I think.

RK: I think a slip of paper and then when the money came in, you could cash that in, your checks.

HB: As far as I know.

RK: So it's called Time Check. Was your father on the railroad?

HB: Yes.

RK: Tell me what he did?

HB: He worked in the Rock Island shops.

RK: Was he paid by a time check? Did he get a check like that?  
(Harriet is thinking about this...)

HB: I was so small I can't remember.

RK: I've often wondered why this part of the city was called Time Check and in coming over to your house I saw a park that said, "The Time Check Recreation Center" or park, and I've often wondered why it was called that and it's just this area, but it had--most of the people worked for the railroad. Is that right?

HB: Yes. They worked at the railroad or Quaker Oats.

RK: Or the Quaker Oats, and you started to work at the Ouaker Oats.  
How old were you when you started?

HB: Fifteen.

RK: You were fifteen. You went through high school?

HB: Oh, no.

RK: Did you work there all the time?

HB: Yes, until I was married.

RK: What did you do at the Quaker Oats?

HB: I was in production, running machines.

RK: Running machines that were filling the cartons?

HB: Yeah, and capping. In those days we hand capped.

RK: Hand capped the...

HB: Packages and then they had formers that made the form score packages, so I run those machines, too.

RK: And you were only fifteen.

HB: Fifteen when I worked.

RK: That's awfully young to go to work.

HB: According to the standards of today.

RK: How much did you get a day or a week?

HB: I got a dollar and a half a day. I lied about my age.

RK: Oh, I see. So that's why you could get the job.

HB: Otherwise I would of had to work eight hours, and I was going to be sixteen in January and so then I--well anyway.

RK: You aren't the first one that's done that. So you...

HB: I worked ten hours a day for a dollar and a half a day.

RK: Ten hours?

HB: For a dollar and a half a day.

RK: Did you have any time off for lunch?

HB: An hour for quite a while, and then they changed it to a half hour.

RK: Oh, that was hard work. A dollar and a half a day.

HB: When you're on your feet all time. Running machines, you could sit down on.

RK: Harriet, that's terrible. I bet your mother worried about you.

HB: Oh, I was the youngest of six so I guess...

RK: She was used to it.

HB: She knew that it was something that I wanted to do, and she knew-- I guess I was happy there so.

RK: You were in school. Was there a Saint Pat's? You go to Saint Patrick's Church.

HB: Yeah.

RK: Was there a Saint Patrick's School when you were growing up?

HB: Yes, and it was built in 1902.

RK: The date, your year were born, but you could have stayed on in high school if you wanted to, couldn't you?

HB: Yes, but I didn't want to.

RK: You didn't want to. You wanted--why, to get money?

HB: I wanted to go to work and get all my own money.

RK: And you had some friends who did the same thing?

HB: Oh, yes, lots of them. Most of the girls were about my age. Well,



they hired a lot. Well, they had quite a few employed at the time and a lot of them, the older women, run packages, but the younger girls usually run all the machines.

RK: How many years did you do that?

HB: Well, I started in--about seven years.

RK: You worked seven years. Did you get any...

HB: And I got married.

RK: Did you get any raises in that time?

HB: I was on piece work, and we got ten cents a thousand.

RK: Ten cents a thousand packages?

HB: Yeah, that you could run through the cap by hand.

RK: Oh, how hard! Did you have a nice supervisor or were they pretty...

HB: Very nice.

RK: So they were...

HB: They were all very nice.

RK: And you had to wear a uniform?

HB: Yes. They were nice.

RK: They were nice unifroms?

HB: Yeah, very nice.

RK: Was Mr. Poe head of the Quaker Oats?

HB: Yes.

RK: Did he come in and look around?

HB: Well, one time I was running a former, and he was standing behind me, and I didn't know it, and I went like this to see if one of the packages had went down on the block, and I guess saw him and I jumped.

RK: Mr. Arthur Poe was a superintendent or the head of the Quaker Oats for years in Cedar Rapids and was a great civic leader.

HB: Yes.

RK: He was president of the Coe Board of Trustees and was a great civic man and was a kind person.

HB: Yes, he was.

RK: People loved him. So he was standing behind you, was he?

HB: He said, "Oh, did I scare you?" And I, "Yes."

RK: It was probably super clean then, too, wasn't it?

HB: Yeah.

RK: Yeah, you had to make sure it was awfully clean. Were you in on the Puff Rice and the Puff Wheat?

HB: Over there, yes, but they had pretty noisy machines, and I'd like to get back on the other side. I never liked it very well, outside of eating the Puffed Rice and Puffed Wheat.

RK: Did you like to eat those? Yeah, I did, too. I grew up on that and oatmeal. Was your husband working at the Quaker Oats?

HB: No. He was a carpenter.

RK: So you met him at church, I bet. Did you meet him at church?

HB: Gosh, I can't...I don't know. I think it was with a girl friend of mine. He and a couple of other boys and my girl friend and I, we were standing talking to some people on the corner, and they called and told us come and get in the car, so we went over, and I guess that was the first night I met him.

RK: What kind of car was it? Must have been a Ford.

HB: It was an old one.

RK: Old Model T, wasn't it?

HB: I think it was.

RK: Open?

HB: But they were nice cars in those days--a ride was a ride.

RK: So you were married when you were about twenty-two then, weren't you?

HB: Yes, but then I went back.

RK: You went back to work at Quaker Oats before your children were born?

HB: Oh, yes, but then work got scarce, and my husband went into Chicago and so then I come back home, and then I went back to work.

RK: You mean it got scarce for him as a carpenter. It was scarce for building.

HB: He had to go to Chicago and then eventually I went and stayed with him, and then we stayed there and, oh, I don't know--maybe about a year or so. Our oldest boy was born there.

RK: And then came back here. Your mother and father were living here?

HB: Yeah. This is where they lived.

RK: They lived in this house?

HB: Yes.

RK: When was this house built?

HB: Well, we moved in 1904--or no, I was four years old--1906, and a boy that lived here in the house before that said that they lived here, and the house was ten years old when they lived here, and we moved in right after they moved out.

RK: It's nice to live in the house you grew up in, isn't it?

HB: Well, yes.

RK: I would think so; it's a cozy one.

HB: Well, my husband had done a lot of repairs, too.

RK: Being a carpenter he could, yes.

HB: Yeah. When I could get him talked into it.

RK: What were some of the jobs that...

HB: He was like the shoemaker.

RK: What?

HB: It's like the shoemaker.

RK: Oh, yes. About your children's shoes, yes.

HB: Yeah, but he enjoyed it.

RK: I was going to say your children--were some of your children born--  
three of them born in this house?

HB: The rest were born in Cedar Rapids.

RK: Did you go to the hospital?

HB: Yes. In Chicago I didn't, but a ...

RK: You went to Mercy?

HB: Mercy.

RK: It was quite different then. You stayed in bed two weeks, didn't  
you?

HB: Yeah, oh yeah.

RK: Now they leave.

HB: You got weak laying in bed.

RK: Oh, of course, it was bad. And now they get up in two days, go home



in two days.

HB: Yeah, which I think is a good thing.

RK: I do, too. They don't have as much trouble, but it's quite different now, isn't it?

HB: Yes, altogether.

RK: I was asking Harriet what they did as a young couple when they were married, what entertainment, and Harriet said she liked to dance.

HB: I liked to dance, and we used to go to out-of-town to dances.

RK: Like where?

HB: Well, there was an Oscar Jones, and I think it was Oscar or one of those, and they have a barn dance, and we went to the barn dances up in the loft, you know.

RK: So, you were pretty busy going to dances?

HB: Yeah, and loved to dance.

RK: And your husband liked it, too, then?

HB: Well, when I taught him, he never really cared about it. He had-- anyway that's what he said, but he surely loved it after he learned how.

RK: Any place in Cedar Rapids that you danced?

HB: Those days, you used to go mostly to a roadhouse. There wasn't no-- and then we'd end up going, oh, sometimes to Danceland.

RK: Tell me about Danceland?

HB: Well, it was quite the up-and-coming dance hall, and then we used to go down to the C.S.P.S. Hall.

RK: Did they have a regular orchestra?

HB: Oh, yes. Then when you went down there to the C.S.P.S. Hall--we went to Z.C.B.J., too. That was, of course, where--oh, I can't think of what that place is that got--it's closed now anyhow, and he always had Bohemian music. So it was the polkas and...

RK: It was fun. Your husband wasn't a Czech, right? You weren't a Czech by any chance, were you?

HB: No. I'm Irish.

RK: You're Irish, and your husband was...

HB: He has a little bit of Czech in him.

RK: Did he?

HB: But his mother was born in Ireland, and I know that his dad had some Bohemian in him.

RK: So you knew lots of good Czech people, I bet.

HB: Yes, and Oaker Oats. I had a lot of friends there.

RK: And they're modest people. They made a big contribution to Cedar Rapids--the Czech people have.

HB: Oh, yes.

RK: I think, Harriet, that we're near the river. I am going to ask you--  
did you skate on the river when you were little?

HB: I remember I roller skate, but I'd never ice skate.

RK: You didn't ice skate. Were you allowed to go in a boat?

HB: Oh, yes.

RK: Did you go over here in a boat because that seems near the dam?

HB: Yes. There was a Sheftic's boathouse, here by the ice house, and we used to get a boat. You could get launches would take you up to the park for 10 cents, and then my folks always went across to the island on Sunday picnic, and Sheftic would take us over there and then...

RK: And leave you?

HB: Leave us all day, and then they come pick us up at night.

RK: What fun that was!

HB: Yeah, it was a lot fun.

RK: And you went up there for 10 cents in a launch?

HB: Yeah, for up to the park then.

RK: For 10 cents.

HB: It was fun.

RK: And then you could rent a row boat or a canoe couldn't you?

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HB: Yeah.

RK: Sheftic's?

HB: Yes. Then Sheftic moved up here to the Ellis Park then. What was it they called it the yacht club, I believe. There are a lot of boats there.

RK: Did you go in a canoe quite a bit?

HB: A few times.

RK: What do you think of the activity on the river today? Have you seen it?

HB: Yes.

RK: Water skiing?

HB: Yes.

RK: Quite different isn't it? It was pretty peaceful when you were going on a picnic, and the dam was so close. I bet your families worried about the dam didn't they?

HB: Well, I think when you live by the river all your life, you have quite a lot of respect for that river.

RK: Yes. You should have.

HB: Because then we've been told so many times, and the reason I never ice skate much; my father always said, "Be careful of the air holes." And if I saw anything that looked like a bubble, I was scared. I thought it was...I roller skate, but I never ice skate.



RK: I've ice skated on the river.

HB: Did you?

RK: Yes. It was cold, but it was fun.

HB: I'll bet it was.

RK: Yes, it was. I ice skated up here.

HB: Did you?

RK: Yes, I think when you do live by the river you gain a respect for it because it is treacherous. Did you have young friends who drowned in the river who didn't know how to swim?

HB: Yes, but you know most people that ever have drowned is people--kids that have come from the other end of town, like from the east side, and they venture down here, but no, you get pretty much--and I have a lot of respect for that slough. That can be treacherous.

RK: Tell me about 1929 when the flood. You were right here then.

HB: I lived out on 21st Street, but my mother lived here, and my brother lived down on Vernal Street and so he come down here. We were worried about the river and my mother, and my brother come down, and he went back and he said, "The house is fine. Nothing the matter. You've got nothing to worry." Well, the dike up here at the park broke and that water just came, and it was in the house.

RK: How deep?

HB: I think it was about, oh, maybe six to seven inches.

RK: On the first floor?

HB: Yes.

RK: Or in the...

HB: Yes, on the first floor.

RK: So the basement was full?

HB: Oh, yes.

RK: What did your mother and father do?

HB: Well, my father was gone by that time, but then we came and the boys took the hose to the house and on the floors, and we saved what we could and a bookcase she had and--but, the rug--it was all full of that--I guess I always call it silt. I don't know what you...

RK: Silt, yes. There were row boats in the streets, weren't there?

HB: Well, every time we had a flood, Sheftic came over with a boat to us. Well, this one time, I wanted to stay out in the boat, and my mother wanted to come in because she had work to do, and I didn't want her to, so she told me how to row a boat. So she came in, and I stayed out in the boat.

RK: Which was the street? Which actually was the street--is that right?

HB: Oh, yeah.

RK: So you rowed the boat back and forth in the street.

HB: All around here.

RK: All around the yard, and ...

HB: That was fun on a row boat.

RK: You could almost fish in your backyard, couldn't you?

HB: Yeah.

RK: Well, you haven't had anything like it since then, have you? Since 1929?

HB: No, but the only thing was when the Vinton ditch overflowed, and then we got a basement full, and it poured in the basement like water going over Niagara Falls, and I opened the door to see what the basement looked like, and I called my husband, and I said, "We're getting drowned out," so he called the police station. He said everything's the same outside, and I said, "Open the door," and he opened the door and called the police, and they said, "Don't go down in the basement." Just like you could, when it was way up here.

RK: How long was it that way? A couple of days?

HB: Oh, well, by the time it goes down it takes about a week at that time. Of course, now they keep the sewers pretty well pumped. It helps a lot.

RK: Then you have a new dike, don't you? That dike has been rebuilt. Isn't the dike...with holes?

HB: Yeah, that's all that's been built. All this end of town has been raised.

RK: Oh, it has?

HB: All of it.

RK: Oh, it has?

HB: Oh, yeah. We were --if I'd known ya, I got a picture, but I don't where it's at. We were way down and all this--my father had--all these houses had to be raised.

RK: You mean they were actually raised up with their foundations?

HB: No. I mean they had to get the house raised because we were way down in the hole. They had raised this end of so high.

RK: My, that was quite a job.

HB: Very.

RK: So you're a lot higher than you were?

HB: Oh, yes, a lot higher.

RK: Were you conscious during--maybe because of the flood or around the flood. Were you conscious of crime then (about looting)?

HB: Crime?

RK: Yes.

HB: Nobody ever thought of it.

RK: No, we didn't.

HB: You mean running in and stealing?

RK: Yes.

HB: No one ever thought it.

RK: Did you lock your door?

HB: Never, and I was telling the family. The other day we were talking, and I said, "Anytime we looked out, and somebody was--we saw people running to the river." We just went out the back door and left the house wide open and went to the river to see what was going on, and when I saw Starchworks blew up...

RK: Tell me about that?

HB: Well, my brother was here, and we were sitting, I guess--I don't know, we was at the table, and an explosion come, and he said, "Oh, what was that?" So we went out, and we saw timber way up in the air going around and so then we took off again and but nobody ever locked the house. And then from there we went downtown and all the window plates were blown out.

RK: You couldn't get probably near the explosion?

HB: No. Oh, no.

RK: You didn't know what it was for quite a while.

HB: No, we didn't know what it was. All we could see was the timber going up, way up in the air. Well, it seemed to us it was way up.

RK: Terrible.



HB: Yes, it was.

RK: Did you have some relatives or friends who were killed?

HB: No.

RK: I think there were about 43 killed in that explosion.

HB: Yeah. I knew people that were, you know, but they really weren't-- and then we moved over here. Well, then Quaker has a fire in 1906, but I was too young to remember that, and I think there was one man lost his life in that one.

RK: The accidents were at railroad crossings too, weren't there? Accidents with the trains. Do you remember any of those?

HB: The trains?

RK: Yes.

HB: Oh, when your family worked at the...

RK: Yeah, and the shops.

HB: We heard all about the jobs and my brother I had two brothers working there and my father.

RK: They were repairing engines, is that right?

HB: Yes. Well, one of my brothers was on a supply car, and the other one worked on the door press, and I had a brother, but he worked at the furniture store--Parlor City. That's not here anymore either.

RK: I remember that...that Cedar Rapids used to be called the parlor

city.

HB: Yes.

RK: And so it was the Parlor City Furniture Company, and I think it was probably on First Street, wasn't it? East?

HB: I was there, but I thought it was farther down--downtown Sixth Avenue.

RK: Maybe so.

HB: But I'm not sure.

RK: I'm not sure either.

HB: I'd have to ask George; he's my brother, and he worked there.

RK: The Parlor City.

HB: And he's up, ninety-one.

RK: Is that right? Well, he remembers a lot about Cedar Rapids, doesn't he?

HB: Yeah, well, when we get together.

RK: What do you talk about when you get together?

HB: Well, right now his wife is in a nursing home so that's about...

RK: What you talk about. When you get to reminiscing, do you talk about the picnics on the river or?

HB: He hardly ever talks about anything like that. He just, like...

RK: He wasn't going to dances with you.

HB: No.

RK: He wasn't a dancer?

HB: He was older and was married.

RK: What movies do you remember? You went to movies at night, didn't you?

HB: Yeah. The buildings...oh, I went in the Palace.

RK: And Isis?

HB: The Isis, the Strand, and the Majestic. Oh, I loved that and the Greene's Opera House.

RK: What did you remember that you saw at the Greene's Opera House?

HB: Oh, yeah. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was popular and...

RK: The Majestic had lots of plays, didn't they?

HB: Yeah, that was vaudeville.

RK: Yes, and there was one play that I remember seeing was "Getting Gertie's Garter." I thought it was awfully funny.

HB: I'll bet.

RK: And there was another one called "Parlor, Bedroom, and Bath," and it was a great thing to go to the Majestic and see these plays.

HB: Well, then they had a theater by the Quaker Oats--

--well, would it be B Avenue, I think. They got that all tore up like that, and they call that the Aerodome.

RK: Oh, the Aerodome--that was a dance hall, wasn't it, or was it a theater?

HB: It was a theater, but it didn't have no top on it. And I had a great aunt, and we talked my mother to go over there and then we went, wait til the show start and we'd to stand around in the front, and then about after the first act, that was half way through, and they'd let us come in and sit down.

RK: You mean free. You got in free that way. That was a slick way to do it.

HB: Then that time they would get to something exciting, then the switch engine would be switching at Quaker, and then you couldn't hear a thing.

RK: You just had to guess.

HB: And then if it rained you got a raincheck.

RK: So you'd have to come back, but it didn't have any top on it; it was all open. I didn't know about this, Harriet. Tell me the name of it again. The Aerodome?

HB: The Aerodome.

RK: And it had a screen and silent movies?

HB: They didn't have movies.

RK: Oh, that was ...

HB: That was all live.

RK: Live stock, I see. Oh.

HB: Live stock. So I say when you get to the thing that you want to hear, about that time, the train would either blow a whistle or ...

RK: There's a story that there was a sign in New York in Broadway, backstage, and it said, "If you think you're good, try Cedar Rapids." So the actors thought--well, Cedar Rapids is a tough place to please. Well, we had a lot of it, though.

HB: Yes, we did

RK: You notice the children today often don't see any, by the ...

HB: I know.

RK: They see plays that are the children's theater put on in the schools, and that's good, but we were exposed to a lot of that.

HB: Well, there was a show next to ... Oh well, I think it was on the Avenue and First Street, and that was called the People's. And that was stock. I always liked stock, and I remember the "Shepard of the Hills," and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," and things like that.

RK: Yeah. It was all good. Did you remember any great actor or actress you saw? Some people remember Sara Bernhardt when she

came to the Majestic or Greene's Opera House I suppose.

HB: Who was that?

RK: Sara Bernhardt, the great actress.

HB: Oh, no I never.

RK: Do you remember any that you saw? I don't remember any that I saw, but I loved to go.

HB: No.

RK: Well, it's quite different now. Do you remember when you saw your first movie, or the first movie with sound?

HB: Oh, you're going way, way back.

RK: Yeah. That was pretty exciting though when we could hear...

HB: That was, too. I can't remember.

RK: Do you remember the piano players at the movies?

HB: Oh, yes.

RK: They played real loud when it was exciting and soft when it was romantic and...

HB: "Humoresque."

RK: Yes, "Humoresque"! What else I wonder? You were saying that there was a tabernacle across from the Aerodome, which was near the Quaker Oats. What kind of tabernacle?

HB: It was Billy Sunday.

RK: Oh, did you go?

HB: Oh, yes.

RK: Tell me about that cause I didn't get in on that. Tell me

HB: I can't remember much about it, but he had little blue vases about like that. I can't remember much about the sermon. And every once in a while he take a hammer and break one of those pretty little blue vases.

RK: Were they were about five inches tall?

HB: Yeah.

RK: And then he'd break them?

HB: Yes, and I thought that was horrible.

RK: Wonder what his point was?

HB: I can't remember what the...

RK: Well, he had a big crowd.

HB: And the floor was all sawdust.

RK: Did your family go with you, or did you just go...

HB: No, just the kids.

RK: Just the kids went?

HB: You know. But my mother was pretty busy all the time and my



father--but we went, my older sister and ...

RK: Did it make any difference how you felt? Did he have any influence on you?

HB: No, the only thing he had on me, was he was breaking those vases. It wasn't very old.

RK: He was making a point of some kind, I ...

HB: Yes, I guess he was. It went over my head.

RK: Maybe it was breaking bad habits.

HB: Well, that could have been.

RK: Could have been alcohol.

HB: Very well could have been.

RK: Bad habits. He made it very vivid, didn't he? Harriet did work at the Roosevelt. This was after you were married and had your children.

HB: Yes.

RK: She went to work in housekeeping at the Roosevelt, and she was just starting to tell me about it.

HB: It wasn't very--well, there isn't much to tell, but then I did go back and work in the check room--that I liked.

RK: Tell me about that.

HB: Well ...

RK: You took the mens' hats

HB: Yeah. The men's hat and their coats and...

RK: And how much did you get--by the hour?

HB: We got paid so much an hour. I can't remember, but then we'd depend on our tips, too.

RK: On the tips, and the reason you did this is to help with the family. So you had four boys to support, didn't you?

HB: Well, they were pretty well--well, the oldest was thirteen and then when Stevens called me and asked me if I wanted to work in the check room I was real happy. And oh, we met a lot of nice people, and I enjoyed it very much.

RK: It was more fun than the housekeeping, wasn't it?

HB: Oh, yeah, much more fun.

RK: You don't know how much you made though?

HB: No, I just can't remember. We were guaranteed so much, and then, but we got enough on the basket. Well, then we just put in our wages. And another lady, she worked in the linen room when I worked there, and she and I worked in the check room then together.

RK: Where was the check room then? Was it down--

HB: It was up on the mezzanine.

RK: Oh, it was on the mezzanine.

HB: It was just a little--about like this and then when they re-modeled, and they made it a walk-in check room.

RK: Yes. I remember the old--you remember the old Montrose, too.

HB: Not very well. I never worked there.

RK: What about when you worked at the Holiday Inn. Where was that--the new one?

HB: Out here on Williams Boulevard. I worked there seventeen years.

RK: You did. It must have been when it opened.

HB: It was open a year before I went, and I was seventy-seven. I fell and broke my hip so I couldn't go back, but my daughter-in-law's housekeeper there now. Most of all my granddaughters have worked there on weekends. It gives them spending, you know--they enjoy it.

RK: Yes, and they're getting more money than you did.

HB: Oh, yes, much more.

RK: So you've quite a bit of your family at the Holiday Inn, haven't you?

HB: That's what Betty and I always said. We should change it from Holiday Inn to Barger Inn--there's only Betty there now.

RK: And she's head of housekeeping?

HB: She's head of housekeeping.

RK: And she's your daughter-in-law?

HB: Yes.

RK: Well, we didn't have motels then, did we? Those motels, we didn't know about those when we were growing up.

HB: Well, I think that--they really were busy those days, but then there wasn't too many motels around. Then you got sprouting up like mushrooms and--but no, I think they keep pretty busy.

RK: That's very nice; I have been over there--its nice.

HB: Yes. It is nice.

RK: To go back to when you were growing up in Cedar Rapids, did you use the streetcars very often? Did you take a streetcar or did you...

HB: Not unless--not too often.

RK: You could walk to Ellis Park, couldn't you?

HB: Yes. We could walk, and we could walk over town. See the streetcars come down Sixth Street those days. Well, by the time you got up there, you'd probably miss a streetcar.

RK: No, I remember that.

HB: So it was just as easy to walk over the bridge.

RK: Even though it was cold at times.

HB: Well, in the wintertime we would cross the ice.

RK: How do you mean?

HB: Oh well, the river was froze over; then they had a path, and everybody crossed the ice. They never got on the bridge.

RK: Oh, you walked on the ice that go across.

HB: Oh, yeah. We cross the ice. Oh, yeah. We could get in town much quicker.

RK: How did you know it was safe?

HB: I didn't.

RK: Your father was worried.

HB: Well, there was a path--well...

RK: But they had a path there.

HB: Everybody was that way. That's a very cold bridge in the winter-time. You know that wind just comes down from the north.

RK: We're talking about the F Avenue, aren't we?

HB: No, Northwestern.

RK: Oh, the Northwestern bridge.

HB: The railroad bridge.

RK: Oh, the railroad bridge, oh yes.

HB: Oh, we very seldom went over that, the F Avenue bridge.

RK: I see. You walked right across the ice. Now the icehouse was nearby, wasn't it?

HB: The icehouse was here, and we used to go down there and cross it from out on the other side of the bank--the east side of the river bank.

RK: Oh, I see so you would be near--I don't know what you'd be near on the east side. It was probably the old Electric Light & Power plant there.

HB: Oh, that was more by F Avenue bridge. It was the railroad bridge here.

RK: So that would be down there more.

HB: Yeah, but it was fun watching them put up ice.

RK: Yeah. Tell me about that because...

HB: Kids don't enjoy it...

RK: No. They don't know anything about it. Ice to them is made in the refrigerator; ice today, for them, is made in the refrigerator. Tell me about watching them put the ice up.

HB: Oh, they cut a path for the cage to go up and then they hired, oh, quite a few men down there with picks, and they would shove ice along and then over here by Hubbard's there's a chute going up there. I don't know whether they've got that chute still going there or not and that carried the ice up and stored it in the icehouse.

RK: With sawdust.

HB: And straw.

RK: Did you play around there any--get some pieces?

HB: Oh, when we had the ice man around. Oh, yeah, that was fun.

RK: Yes. Did you put a sign up in your window?

HB: Yes.

RK: And didn't you put it if you wanted 25 pounds, you'd put a 25 or a 100?

HB: Yes.

RK: And then you'd go out in the wagon and steal a little. I did.

HB: Yes. I did too.

RK: And they had horses.

HB: Yes. We had to go there with little wagons and pick up the pieces of ice and go around and sell them, but, of course, the drivers they weren't very nice to us. Well, I can understand because they were afraid we'd get hurt, you know, with the horses.

RK: Oh, yes, but you sold...

HB: So, it was really for our safety.

RK: So you had a coaster wagon full of ice--pieces of ice.

HB: Yeah. We'd go around and sell it.



RK: Oh, isn't that fun?

HB: Yes. It was.

RK: Well, it's quite different. Are those icehouses up now, or are they gone? Are those demolished, those icehouses?

HB: Yeah.

RK: They're not there any more--even the...

HB: No.

RK: I guess they're gone.

HB: Yes.

RK: Well, that river must have been pretty clean if you could eat that ice from the...

HB: Well, yes...and then my son, Betty and Dave, they lived out here. Well, where the east side boat harbor is now, and we were out there, oh, around--well, we used to sit up kind of late and play cards, and we heard an awful crash, and Dave said, "Oh, the ice is breaking up," and we all ran outside and I was scared. You could hear that ice coming down, and the tree limbs--trees breaking underneath the weight of the ice, and "Oh, I'm going home," but it stopped. You know where it got piled.

RK: It was fine, wasn't it? That was because it was thawing, and it was melting.

HB: Well, yeah. When it breaks up, oh, it makes a crash.

RK: Like thunder.

HB: Yes. Very much like thunder, but you could hear it going on the island and breaking the trees all down, but it was at night, and you couldn't see.

RK: We're talking about the old library when Harriet just said that they would stay open on Thanksgiving afternoon.

HB: Thanksgiving, and we used to go there a lot on Thanksgiving.

RK: What a nice thing to do. I am afraid they don't do that now.

HB: No, I know it.

RK: Did you have favorite books, favorite authors?

HB: I used to--well, I don't know as I got old, well, then it was kind of--it was kind of hard getting...

RK: Did your children go?

HB: Well, one daughter-in-law then she goes and buys books, but I don't. But I love to read, but it's just unhandy.

RK: You'll have to see the new library; it's so lovely. It's so big and so nice. So you have to have maybe your daughter take you there.

HB: Yes. I will.

RK: You tell them that they used to be open on Thanksgiving afternoon. I wonder if people would come now. I can't imagine it, but...

next day.

RK: Is that right? I bet your children love that. What about Easter? Did you have a rabbit?

HB: I can't remember about Easter either.

RK: About hiding Easter eggs when your children ...

HB: My children, we used to color them, but we never hid them.

RK: Harriet and I are talking about clothes that were made and when we were young, and Harriet just said, "Well, they always had a dress maker." Did she come to the house?

HB: No. We went to her house. She lived up here a couple of blocks. She was colored...and a very good seamstress.

RK: You picked out the pattern and the material and took it to her.

HB: Yeah, we would pick out the material and take it up.

RK: Did you ever buy any clothes ready made?

HB: I think when I was about eight my mother brought me a dress back from Chicago that was --and I loved that one, too.

RK: You remember it. What color was it?

HB: It was kind of a white with a little stripe in it.

RK: But this dressmaker was pretty busy. She'd sew for lots of people?

HB: Yeah.

RK: We used to have one who came every day for a week and spend the whole day, would have lunch with us.

HB: Yeah.

RK: She just sewed us all up for the season, and we got everything done at once. Well, I don't remember buying clothes too much. Do you remember?

HB: No. Well, after I went to work, then I did, very few.

RK: Where did you shop?

HB: Oh.

RK: Killians?

HB: No, mostly Penney's and sometimes we ordered by catalog a lot.

END OF SIDE ONE--BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

RK: This is Harriet Barger, and we were just talking about Ellis Park and, Harriet, you said you had many picnics up there.

HB: Yes, we did, and then on Sunday afternoon, everybody walked up there 'cause we could walk from here. Because by the time the streetcar got here, it was loaded. You know just crowded.

RK: Too full?

HB: Yeah, too full. So we used to walk up there. We never minded, and the spring we used to walk up as far as Manhattan and pick violets and...

RK: There was a dance hall up there at Manhattan, wasn't there?

HB: Yeah.

RK: Did you dance up there?

HB: The dance hall?

RK: Yes.

HB: Yes, I was there.

RK: You were at all of them, I think.

HB: That was little, but being I was young. Yes, I went.

RK: And isn't that where Robin's Lake is?

HB: Yes. It is.

RK: At Manhattan. Do you remember when the pool was built in Ellis Park--the swimming pool?

HB: Just barely, I wasn't that interested very.

RK: What about your children? Did they swim there?

HB: The grandchildren.

RK: The grandchildren. I've just heard a very startling thing that when that swimming pool was built the Black people were not allowed to swim there. It's hard to believe.

HB: My, oh, weren't they?

RK: It's very hard for me to believe, but that's been verified--that makes me--I just can't believe it, but I guess that was the case.

HB: I don't know cause I wasn't up around there that much.

RK: Did you ever go to Bever Park?

HB: Yeah, but I liked the Ellis better.

RK: Yeah. You're close. Let's see what else did you do for...

HB: Going to the zoo. If you go to one, you've seen them all. I'm not knocking the park any, you know, but Ellis was just the favorite.

RK: Well, yes, it's lovely. It really is. We're talking now about doctors when Harriet had her children, and it was Dr. Broghammer that would make house calls.

HB: He would come to the house and be with one of the boys--he had bad ears--but then after that I think we mostly all went to the office.

RK: But it was nice to know he would come, isn't it?

HB: Oh yes. He was a wonderful doctor. Of course, I have a wonderful doctor, too, now.

RK: Who is that, Harriet?

HB: Dr. Thaler

RK: Oh. He's one of my dear friends.

HB: Yeah?

RK: Yes, he is. He's a marvelous doctor. I had lunch with Mrs. Thaler yesterday.

HB: Oh, that was Carol Lee that just called. She's a ...

RK: Oh, his nice nurse.

HB: Yeah.

RK: She's lovely, isn't she?

HB: Isn't she lovely?

RK: Yes. Well, what do you know about that?

HB: Well, we didn't have a doctor after Dr. Broghammer died, and he died of leukemia, and my husband had a nice little job. A ladder slipped from under him, and well, he had several, but then, this time, well, the contractor said, "Who's your doctor?" He said, "We don't have one," and he said, "Well, mine is Dr. Thaler," and I says, "I don't care, we'd just go to your doctor." So then Red went to Dr. Thaler, and he liked Thaler so well cause then I went, too. Been going to him about, well, about around 37 years.

RK: Imagine, he's a wonderful man.

HB: Very wonderful.

RK: He's very compassionate.

HB: Yes. I think...

RK: And tend to--he really cares.

HB: Yes, I think he does too.



RK: And that's what you want with a doctor. You want him to care, isn't that right?

HB: Yeah.

RK: We're talking about cars, and Harriet said her husband's first car was the Chandler.

HB: My husband and I started going with him.

RK: Oh, you were courted in a Chandler. Tell me what it looked like?

HB: It had a straight windshield, running boards and...

RK: It was open.

HB: Yeah. Oh my, yes. It was open.

RK: Where did you go in it? Did you just ride around?

HB: Because we just wanted and got so easy to take a ride. Well, then on Sunday we always took his folk's because we wasn't Dad's car. We rode around with them, but otherwise we just went around with another couple, and we used to ride around and at that time they had what they call a seedling mile remember that?

RK: Yes. I do.

HB: So we used to ride out there.

RK: Always. It was paved, one mile, it was paved.

HB: One mile. Do you remember that?

RK: Sure. You always went there, tried your car out there and

HB: Yes.

RK: It was great luxury to ride on cement.

HB: I don't believe how much mud you went by.

RK: To get there.

HB: Yes.

RK: And you had to put chains on.

HB: Oh, heavens. When we lived in Chicago, well, we used to come home and maybe there would be a storm laying over. You could see it kind of building up, and I was swear to heaven every-time we hit that 28 miles of dirt road; it was mud. Pouring like mad, and the boys had to get out if we had another couple riding with us. They had to get out and try to get on chains.

RK: That's right. Were the side curtains up?

HB: Well, we had a Ford Sedan then.

RK: Oh, but you had, with the Chandler you had side curtains, didn't you?

HB: Well, with that we didn't have side curtains on the Sedan.

RK: No. You had. It's quite different and then what kind of car did you have? What was the Sedan?

HB: It was a Ford Sedan, Model T, and we went from the Model T to the Model A.

RK: And gas cost how much a gallon?

HB: I don't even remember.

RK: About eleven cents, didn't it?

HB: I think so.

RK: Now they are pretty happy it's a dollar.

HB: Yeah.

RK: We're going to talk about women's suffrage. You were in school?

HB: Yeah. I was going to Harrison School at the time.

RK: How did your mother feel about it?

HB: I don't think she ever thought--you know--it wasn't much.

RK: Well, evidently you remember that.

HB: I remember the teacher wearing a button.

RK: Oh, the teacher and it said...

HB: She had a button.

RK: She wanted the women to win the vote--

HB: Well, we were pretty young, but she wore that button.

RK: Oh, that's--I don't. Well, that's good to remember. Do you

have any memories of Prohibition?

HB: Yes. That's been a load, too.

RK: Anything definite about that?

HB: I don't know much about that.

RK: And let's see, what did you do in World War I? Did you knit as a child?

HB: The day armistice was signed?

RK: Yes. What did you do?

HB: Talking about that the other day, too. We went to work. The whistles were blown earlier in the morning. We were still in bed so we got up, of course--seven o'clock I had to be to work and...

RK: This is when you were at the Quaker Oats?

HB: Yeah, and we went to work, and we got to work, and we all decided we weren't going to work so we walked off the job. Then the floor lady said we were like a bunch of Indians. I suppose maybe we were, and we rode trucks all day long.

RK: What kind of trucks? Do you mean any trucks?

HB: Oh, any truck that would happen to--everybody was on trucks, and they spent the day just rambling around the town and singing, and everybody was real happy that a...

RK: I remember it, too. We tied tin cans on the back of a car, of

Our neighbor's Studebaker and went downtown with all these tin cans behind. It was pretty exciting, wasn't it?

HB: Oh, wasn't it. I think we went all day. That's what I was telling somebody the other night, and went all day--and we wasn't hungry and finally somebody suggested going on and having something to eat so we went to this restaurant and had steak. And the waitress said to me, "Medium, rare, or well done?" I didn't know what she meant.

RK: You just wanted the steak.

HB: I said, "Well, oh, I guess I'll take it rare." Well, I got it rare all right.

RK: And she was telling about the steak, and we were talking about resaurants, and you remember the Third Avenue Virginia, right?

HB: And the Second Avenue

RK: Second Avenue.

HB: Second and Third Avenue.

RK: They were both called the Virginia?

HB: Yeah, one was Second Avenue Virginia and the other was Third Avenue, But we always went to Third Avenue.

RK: That was better.

HB: Well, we were pretty well acquainted and a ...

RK: That was right by the tracks, wasn't it? Right by the tracks.

HB: Yeah. Right by the tracks. Well, we were pretty good friends of the--well, we all call him Pete, and then there was a George. The last I saw of George he worked at the Hub, down here on Sixth Street--but Pete, we all become very good friends, and he used to come over to the house and cooked roasts for us, and we'd put on dinner over at the house. We lived very nice.

RK: What would you eat down at the Virginia, you remember?

HB: Oh, usually a pork sandwich. Oh, they were--and chicken sandwich.

RK: And it cost probably 50 cents.

HB: It didn't--yeah, about that.

RK: Just about.

HB: Oh, and sometimes, I take one of those pork sandwiches.

RK: Does it have gravy on it?

HB: No. We just got a cold pork sandwich and then, of course, Pete, he went over to Greece, and I had a heart attack so that was it. Then, they had a little place by the Union Depot, and the call that the Greasy Spoon, but they had the best tenderloins, so we used to go there and get tenderloins.

RK: I bet they were good.

HB: Oh, real good.

RK: I would go and get a Coney Island red hot for five cents.

HB: Oh, weren't they.

RK: I loved them. I still do, but they're not five cents anymore.

HB: No. Well, then you buy them.

RK: I don't remember where, but I ...

HB: Last time I heard there was a little place on Fourth Street by the  
along the tracks--and they had them, but that's been a few years  
back.

RK: My, they were good. We would get a Coney Island red hot right by  
the old library so we'd work in the study in the library and come  
out and have a fun, spend five cents on a Coney Island red hot.  
It's good.

HB: Yes, we had them right up here on Third Avenue when the Quaker, and  
we took our lunch, but if anybody was going up to buy a Coney Island,  
we always had our nickel, and we'd throw our lunch out and have them  
bring back the Coney Islands. Oh, they were good.

RK: And they were so good.

End of Side Two - End of Interview



