

ADH 1153

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH Mary Hixenbaugh

CONDUCTED BY Kris Larson

DATE March 25, 1985

TRANSCRIBER Imelda K. Collins

10-07

2005.10.38

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

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

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

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

3. --Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- 3-4. --Trolleys (the Interurban)
4. --Horses and First Automobiles
  - Mud roads and the seedling mile
- 4-5. --Hunter Airport and the first planes
  - Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

5. --Newspapers
5. --Radios
  - Advertising
6. --Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

- 6,7. --Motion Pictures
  - Cedar Rapids Parks
- 7,8. --Dances
  - Carnival Week
  - Chautauqua
  - Community Theater
  - Little Gallery
  - Symphony Orchestra
10. --Circus
  - Greene's Opera House
- 9,10. --Amusement Parks (\*\*\*\*\*) Cedar Park
  - Camps
  - Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)
- 8,9. --Medicine Shows

2. Famous Characters

- 11,12. --Cherry Sisters
12. --Grant Wood
  - Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
  - Marvin Cone
13. --Douglas/Hall
- 16,17. --Bill Robinson

3. Lifestyle

- Life before air conditioning
- Winter Activities

14. --Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)

- Clothing
- Toys

14. --Saloons/Taverns

- Farm Life

4. Family Life

- Household Help

18-20. --Women's Roles

13,14. --Childrens' Activities/Behavior

- Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- Indians

16,17. --Segregation of Blacks

- Jobs Available

16. --Minorities

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

10. --Cedar Rapids Schools

- Coe College
- Mount Mercy College
- Cornell College

2. Government

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

14,15. --Kenwood

3. Medical

17. --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

- 21. --Children/Discipline
- 21. --Sex/Petting
  - Charity
  - Divorce
  - Work
- 18-20,22. --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)
- 22. --Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
- 23. --Bank Closings (1933)
  - Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
  - Public Library Murder(1921)

2. National Historic Events

- Womens' Suffrage
- 23-24. --World War I
  - Roaring 20's
  - Prohibition
  - Great Depression

JUNIOR LEAGUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MARY HIXENBAUGH

By Kris Larson

March 25, 1985

Mary Erickson Hixenbaugh was born in Story City, Iowa, in 1911, the daughter of Fred Erickson and Bertha Grunig Erickson. After moving to Cedar Rapids in 1916, she attended St. Joseph's, Immaculate Conception, McKinley Junior High and old Washington High School.

An early marriage resulted in a son, Patrick Shirley, born in 1928, and a later divorce. In 1943 she married George Hixenbaugh and is now widowed.

Mrs. Hixenbaugh has held a variety of jobs within the community, including dress shop clerk, dental assistant, bookkeeper and dancer. Her memories include the different means of transportation, communication and recreation and reveal many of the attitudes and values held in the early part of the century.

KL: Today is Monday, March 25, 1985, and I'm interviewing Mary Hixenbaugh at her home. Okay, Mary, let's start with when you were born.

Hixenbaugh: I was born in 1911 in Story City, Iowa.

KL: Okay. And how long did you live in Cedar Rapids?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I came to Cedar Rapids when I was five (5) so that's 69 years.

KL: What are your parents' names?

Hixenbaugh: Fred Erickson and Bertha.

KL: Where did you go to school? All the schools that you went to.

Hixenbaugh: I went to what used to be St. Joseph's School, and then I went to Immaculate Conception School; then I went to McKinley Junior High School; and then I went to Washington High School.

KL: Was it the Washington where it is now?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, no. I was down where Greene Square Park is now.

KL: Are you married or single?

Hixenbaugh: I've been married and divorced, and I am now widowed.

KL: Did you raise a family?

Hixenbaugh: I raised one son.

KL: And what has been your career occupation during your adult years? What are all the jobs you've had?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I have part time jobs in dress shops.

KL: I see. Didn't you say -

Hixenbaugh: I was a dental assistant for several years, and then from there I went to work in a dental laboratory as a dental technician and bookkeeper. And then I wound up as the bookkeeper there for years. And I retired from that.

KL: Didn't you tell me once that you did some dancing?

Hixenbaugh: Yes. I used to dance for stag parties. In fact, after I was divorced I practically put my son through grade school from money I made dancing for parties.

KL: Okay, I'll ask you some more questions about that later. Now, let's just start with technology in the community. What can you remember about railway travel?



Hixenbaugh: I can remember the old steam trains. In fact, the only train I ever rode on was an old steam train, because then cars became more available and we traveled by car. So, I never did ride on what we'd call the streamliners. We had two depots: one was the Union Station and the other was Northwestern Depot. The Northwestern was on First Avenue and Fourth Street. Union Depot was over across from Greene Square.

KL: Where did you used to go? Did you go from Cedar Rapids to where? On the train or - What towns did you travel to by train?

Hixenbaugh: Well, when I was a little girl we went to Sioux City one time to visit my father's sister. And then we went to Minnesota where my mother's father lived in the country, Comfrey, Minnesota.

KL: Do you remember at all what the cost of a ticket was to ride on the trains back then?

Hixenbaugh: I have no idea. It couldn't have been very much or we wouldn't have been going, because we didn't have that much.

KL: You mentioned that you rode on some trolleys. Where did the trolleys run that you - ?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, we had streetcars, as we called them--streetcars in Cedar Rapids. And I think we had better service than we have with the buses right now. Maybe I shouldn't say that, but, well, for example, one streetcar went from Bever Park to Ellis Park. And we had one that went to Mound Farm and, I think, to 13th Street, S.E. One went to Vernon Heights,

that was out Mount Vernon Avenue. We had, oh, many street-cars. They just about - well, they covered all the needs of the city.

KL: And what was the cost of riding on the streetcar?

Hixenbaugh: For a child it was a nickel and ten cents for adults.

KL: For unlimited riding, as far as you wanted to go?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, you'd get a transfer, but transfers were free. If your streetcar didn't go where you wanted to go, you went where you met another streetcar.

KL: Do you remember at all when people rode horses?

Hixenbaugh: No.

KL: Or were there mostly cars then?

Hixenbaugh: No. Well, I can remember the old ice wagons were pulled by horses, when I was a little girl. There was cars, but they weren't the kind of cars that we have today. But I can remember, I suppose, some farmers coming into town with horses because the edge of the city wasn't out as far as it is now.

KL: Did your family own a car when you were little or - ?

Hixenbaugh: No, no. We always managed to have a friend that had a car, but we didn't have one. We rode the streetcar.

KL: Okay. That was lucky that you had friends that had cars. What do you remember about the first planes and the Hunter Airport?

Hixenbaugh: I can remember they were two seaters and they were open cockpits and I had to ride in one. And you could take the ride for \$1 a minute or ten minutes for \$10 around the city. And they put a helmet on you, and you did all your



viewing from over the side. And after you got off the plane, you couldn't hear for about an hour.

KL: And where was the Hunter Airport then?

Hixenbaugh: I'm not positive about this, but it seems to me it's where our airport is now.

KL: Okay.

Hixenbaugh: It was out that direction. I think that's where it was.

KL: Didn't you tell me your father wouldn't let you ride on the plane, and you came home and told him you did it afterwards?

Hixenbaugh: Yes, yes. When--planes were rather scarce then--someone saw a plane up, they would jump in their car and drive around town and follow the plane. And one day when they came home, my father told me that they had followed a plane around, and I said I was in it. And I hadn't asked him 'cause I knew he wouldn't let me go, and I wanted to ride in the plane.

KL: Okay. How about newspapers back then?

Hixenbaugh: I can remember we had The Gazette and The Republican. And I don't remember what year it was that The Republican was gone.

KL: Okay. You told me you remembered some things about radio stations, also. What can you tell us about that?

Hixenbaugh: First radio station in Cedar Rapids was WJAM. And it was owned by a man called Tex Perham, and he had it in a garage in back of his house over on the West side. I can't give you the street. I should. And then Harry Parr had a radio station on Second Avenue, and I think it was about--it was

15th Street. Then WJAM became KWCR. That was for Keep Watching Cedar Rapids, I guess. And then Waterloo Morning Tribune from Waterloo came down here and that became - that's when WMT got its start.

KL: How about telephones? Did you have a telephone when you were little?

Hixenbaugh: Yeah. Always had a telephone.

KL: What were they like back then?

Hixenbaugh: Well, we had wall phones; and we also had one on the table. You know, the one that stood upright like a little pole with the knob on it and the receiver that hung at the side.

KL: And you had to talk to the operator?

Hixenbaugh: Yes. You got the operator and gave the number. I can even remember one of my old telephone numbers--it was 4069J.

KL: That's kind of unusual compared to the ones we have now, the numbers. What did people do for amusement or for recreation back then? Did you go to many movies or dances or - ?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes. Yeah, we had many movie houses. On First Avenue was the Crystal Theatre and the Grand Theatre on the north side of the street. And on the south side was the old Columbia Theatre. And I used to go to the Crystal when I was a little girl because my father used to - It was a silent movie then, and my father used to play piano for the theatre. So, on Sundays, my sister and I got to go for nothing because my dad played there. On Second Avenue was the Palace Theatre on the north side, and the Isis Theatre was on the south side. And then what is now the World

Theatre was the Strand. The Iowa and the Paramount were built much later.

KL: Okay.

Hixenbaugh: There was also - pardon me. There was also a theatre down on the southwest - southeast side, down on the south end. I think it's the one the Community Players took over later. I believe it was called the Colonial, but there was a theatre down there.

KL: What about the dances you said you went to? Did your Dad play at any dances, or - ?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, he played with an orchestra that used to be pretty well known around Iowa, Clark's Orchestra. Danceland was - well, it was one of those - Danceland. At one time there was a Winter Garden. There was one called Hammil Hall which was over Kresge's when Kresge's store was on First Avenue and Third Street then. And up over it was a dancing studio by day, I think, and a dancehall by night. And where the Iowa Theatre is was Boyson's Drug Store; and they had a cafeteria in the basement, and on the second floor was a dancehall. And we had one called the Winter Garden-- seems to me that that was over on Fourth Avenue somewhere. And, of course, we had open air, like Cedar Park was a dancehall--a dance. And then where the old auditorium - they turned that into a sort of a nightclub, and they had dances there.

KL: Was that a pretty big form of entertainment for people on weekends just to go dancing?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yeah. The dances were held about twice a week or so. I guess they were oftener than that, but people would go on weekends.

KL: Would, like, the whole family go? Or could young, single people go? Or did they have to be escorted or - ?

Hixenbaugh: No, no. You could stag it or go with someone or -

KL: Did children go to these dances, too, or was it mostly young adults or - ?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, mostly young adults. And older people danced then, too, a lot. There were a few places that - well, like where they took children to dances - were like the lodges. Like the Moose Lodge. They had dances for the children. But the movies, everybody went to the movies in those days.

KL: Okay. You mentioned before medicine shows. What were those like?

Hixenbaugh: Well, just like you see on TV sometimes now. They'd set up a tent and they'd have somebody come out and sing, and that's when they'd put on a little play. And then somebody'd go around and hawk his bottle of elixir that was supposed to cure everything. I've seen recently--not too recently--but on television stories have had medicine men in it and that was pretty true to form. They were like that.

KL: Where'd they have those?

Hixenbaugh: Any place there was a vacant lot. It could be any place in town. If there was a vacant lot, they, I suppose, got permission. They would set up and -

KL: Did they usually draw a pretty big crowd?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes, people and folks from the neighborhood, you know. If they could walk there, they'd just see something going on and everybody would come in. And they had - there's no seats. You stood - stood around and watched it.

KL: Did they usually sell a lot of bottles?

Hixenbaugh: Quite a bit. Quite a bit, yeah. People were just as gullible then as they are now.

KL: I guess so. You mentioned before the Chautauqua. I'm not sure what that means.

Hixenbaugh: Well -

KL: You didn't ever see a Chautauqua Show?

KL: Well, it was under a tent. You've heard of the Toby and Susie shows here? I think I heard just recently that they had finally folded in some part of Iowa. But they were troupes, like show troupes, only they operated under a tent. And then they usually sold candy and Cracker Jacks, and in the intermission somebody went up and down the aisles. But they used to put on some pretty good shows. They had some pretty good actors and actresses. And some people got to start in Chautauquas.

KL: What about amusement parks? Did you go to the Alamo?

Hixenbaugh: I don't remember that at all.

KL: Did you ever go to any at all?

Hixenbaugh: Yes, Cedar Park. At a Cedar Park, well, see what is out there now? I believe it's out where Armar Ballroom is or - They used to have little - They had road cars. They had a ferris wheel out there and they also had - They used to have a dance hall out there. They had a ferris wheel and

they had a little train for kids that ran all around. They had merry-go-rounds or a carousel. I guess that's what you'd call it. And they'd have booths where you could buy little souvenirs, or little games you could try for a carnival-like atmosphere.

KL: Did you ever go to any community centers like the Y, or did they ever have anything that you went to?

Hixenbaugh: No, but when I was going to Washington High School we didn't have a cafeteria or anything. Washington High School was a condemned building when I was going. Across the street from Washington High School was the YWCA. So everybody went to the YWCA for their lunch. We ate dinners over there.

KL: They served it to you right there at the Y?

Hixenbaugh: Well, they had a cafeteria over there.

KL: I see.

Hixenbaugh: Another thing we used to do for amusement, we had a lot of these little miniature golf courses around town. People used to - 'Course, they could do that at night in the summer time. It was lighted.

KL: Okay, how about the circus? Were there many circuses when you were little?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes. Most of the circuses, seems to me, used to set up somewhere over on the west side. But the parade was the big thing. Everybody went to the parades and everybody used to be down and watch them unload. That was as big a deal as going to the circus, to see them unload the elephants and all the animals.



KL: A lot different from the way we see a circus now, I think.

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. All the sights.

KL: You told me an interesting story before about the Cherry Sisters, and maybe you can share that again. What kind of act did the Cherry Sisters have?

Hixenbaugh: Well, they had - I don't believe they danced. I remember they used to sing. They put on little plays. There were three of them originally. I remember only the two, Effie and Addie. They were - well, they were so bad that people used to just go see if they were really as bad as everyone said. I'm never sure whether they really were that bad or they were just so smart, because they played for all the crown heads of Europe. And they had - well, one little skit they did was called "The Gypsy's Morning." I don't know which one it was. One was the girl and the other played the part of a gypsy, and she sang this song to the girl and then she went back and put on men's pants and came out as the wicked man that tried to lure the girl away or seduce her. And they used to sing little songs. They had one little song about a girl. She saw a girl smoking a cigarette and how terrible it was. And then she had one little song she sang - one of them sang a little song about it was raining. So she stood in the tub and held an umbrella over her head, and she insisted there'd be water in the tub. And they used to play behind nets in some places because people would take - when they played in the Majestic Theatre, people actually took fruits to throw at them while they watched the show.

KL: Oh, dear! Now, didn't you tell me that you used to dance at the same time they did?

Hixenbaugh: I - at one time I did. I danced for - I forget what the group was, but they had a bunch of - I think it was the Shriners or something like that. They had a bunch of men from out of town. They all wanted to know what the Cherry Sisters were like. So they hired the Cherry Sisters, and I used to - my name's on this? I used to do the hula hole and I had to stand there in a grass skirt. And when they brought the Cherry Sisters in, they had to hide me because they said they wouldn't go on if they saw me in such a costume.

KL: Oh, my. You said when you went to McKinley that Grant Wood was a teacher there.

Hixenbaugh: Grant Wood taught art at McKinley Junior High School, yes. And at the time, Mrs. Prescott, Frances Prescott, was the principal and she was very much influential in getting him to go to Europe and just paint. I don't know if he actually studied over there, but he said while he was in Europe is when he began to realize that where he belonged was here in Iowa, to paint what he knew best.

KL: And what did you tell me about your yearbook?

Hixenbaugh: Well, we used to have a book called the McKinley Mirror, and at the end of the season all the kids went around and had the teachers--their favorite teachers--sign their yearbook. And Grant Wood used to sign the yearbooks, and he would sign a "W" and a pair of glasses and a "D" which

looked almost like him. And I didn't keep mine. I could kick myself for that.

KL: I'll bet. As long as we're talking about people here, you had mentioned Mrs. Douglas and the Halls and that they had a duck pond. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Hixenbaugh: At Bruce more? Yes. When Howard Hall's wife was - I guess it was before she was married. There was Margaret and Barbara and Ellen Douglas. And they had a duck pond, and in the winter time it's freeze up. And they let all the kids from all over town go out there and skate. We learned to skate on their duck pond. They were also the first ones in Cedar Rapids to have a Cord automobile. I think it was 16 cylinders. And the whole town turned out whenever that went down the street.

KL: I never heard of that kind. What'd you used to do in the winter?

Hixenbaugh: What do you mean, what I used to do?

KL: For any outdoor sports, or what did people used to do when the weather was really bad, for entertainment?

Hixenbaugh: You mean kids or adults?

KL: Kids. When the weather was bad, what kinds of things did people do inside for entertainment?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I suppose grown people probably went, oh, to the movies. We went to the movies any time of year. And during the daytime, like vacations and stuff, probably went skating and sledding. And 'course we didn't do any skiing around here. Well, during the summer time everybody went

Hixenbaugh: It was a little town, yes. I don't remember what year, but I can remember when it was annexed to Cedar Rapids. I can also remember, I think, about that time Cedar Rapids was around fifty thousand.

KL: Did Kenwood then have its own, you know, entertainment spots and taverns here?

Hixenbaugh: I don't know. I don't think there were - I don't think there were taverns here. It was pretty small. It was just a little town between Cedar Rapids and Marion, you might say. But I remember people telling me that they hated to be annexed because of the water. Because they had spring water here. They had their own water. And there used to be a little spring house, and I think it was - I don't know about 37th or 38th Street out here in Kenwood. 'Course, they had to go on the city water lines when they were annexed.

KL: Where does the name Kenwood come from?

Hixenbaugh: I don't know. I don't know that. I do think - you know the Kenwood House Furniture? They used to be Kenwood Transfer, and I think that started here in Kenwood. And they used to haul furniture and stuff first. They started little, the Kenwood boys; I've heard them called around here -

KL: I just wondered if that was the name of somebody or - you know, there's Kenwood School and Kenwood Library, and I just wondered.

Hixenbaugh: I don't know. I don't know where it got its name.

KL: Let's just go to talk about minorities. Here in Kenwood, were there minorities? Were there even anything you can remember about Cedar Rapids? What were the different groups of people, and how were they looked upon by others?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I think we had about every nationality and every color there was in Cedar Rapids at one time. We still have many different kinds of churches here--Greek Orthodox, and I think - oh, I don't remember them all. We have the Synagogues; 'course, we've always had those. And going to McKinley School, we had Blacks, we had Arabs, we had Czechs--we called them Bohemians then. We had Jewish children, and of course -

KL: Seems like it is now. They have quite a mixture of kids at that school, too.

Hixenbaugh: It was just where it was located. Because Oak Hill used to be pretty much the Black district, and, well, deep into Oak Hill. And then, I guess on Mount Vernon Avenue, along there where there were bakeries and stores, grocery stores and things, that was mostly Bohemian people and Czech people in that area.

KL: What can you remember about segregation of Blacks?

Hixenbaugh: I can remember that they weren't allowed to stay in the hotel. I think when it was brought home to me the most was when Bill Robinson played. This wasn't way back, but it was after the Iowa Theatre was built because Bill Robinson played the Iowa Theatre and having grown up with Blacks sitting next to me in school and playing on the same volleyball team with them and stuff like that, I don't

think I realized there was so much difference until the Civil Rights thing come along. And then I began to wonder how they thought about me. And when I went to see Bill Robinson, he made the little remark about the lady where he was staying and what a good cook she was and what wonderful gravy she made. And then it was brought home to me that he had to stay at a Black person's house because he couldn't stay at a hotel in Cedar Rapids, and I had never really quite realized it before then.

KL: How about the hospitals? What kind of hospitals were there, the earliest recollection you have?

Hixenbaugh: Well, we had Mercy and St. Luke's. 'Course, they weren't as large as they are now, but they were pretty good sized hospitals as far back as I can remember.

KL: Now, did people - did doctors make house calls very much back then?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes, yes. Doctors did make housecalls and children were born at home; my son was born at home.

KL: Were most babies born at home or - ?

Hixenbaugh: No, no, I don't think so. I think the doctors even then - When my son was born, the doctors would prefer that you went to the hospital. But if people didn't have a lot of money, they just decided it's be cheaper to have their baby at home, and have the baby at home. Unless there were complications, and then the doctor, often in his own car, would pick them up and whisk them off to the hospital.



KL: Okay, I'd really like to ask you some questions about your career because you've had a lot of different kinds of jobs. And first of all, how old were you when you were divorced?

Hixenbaugh: I don't remember that.

KL: Was your little boy quite young then?

Hixenbaugh: He was about eight years old. I was in my 30s.

KL: Did you work when he was a small child or how old was he when you first started working?

Hixenbaugh: Well, after - when I was divorced, I had to work.

KL: You didn't work before that time?

Hixenbaugh: No, just odd jobs. Like, you know, when I was going to school and during the summertime. You could get a job somewhere. You could get part-time work on Saturdays in a little dress shop or you could work in the dime store always around Christmas time making Christmas money. I remember when I was in high school that I used to take dancing lessons and the building that was next to the dancing studio was a little phone repair shop. And I used to go in and talk to the lady in there, and we became pretty good friends. And I kept asking her why she didn't let me, you know, come in and work on Saturdays, 'cause I was taking typing and I wanted to keep up on my typing. So I got a job for \$2 a week to go in on Saturdays and type up a bunch of, like her advertising. And then I learned something real good about the phone repair business. We used to have the wind-up victrolas to the phone repair shop to be fixed. And if the spring broke up at the edge where it was bent over, that's usually where it broke, then we'd

just bend it over and punch another little hole, wind the string back up and you bought a new spring.

KL: Well, after you were divorced and you started working, what was your first full-time job or - ?

Hixenbaugh: A dental assistant.

KL: And that's when you got into - ?

Hixenbaugh: Yeah.

KL: And what was it like to be a working woman then? Were there many women who worked, or - ?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes. Yeah, but they had - well, on a business part, as long as I can remember, women worked 7 to 11 at Quaker Oats and places like that. They used to work at packing houses and, 'course, always as clerks and receptionists and stenographers.

KL: 'Course, when the war was on, a lot of women were working. What kinds of jobs did they have then?

Hixenbaugh: Well, they worked in factories where they made things for defense.

KL: And when the war was over, then what?

Hixenbaugh: When the war was over they were expected to go home so when the boys got out of the service they'd have a job.

KL: Did most women do that?

Hixenbaugh: Oh, yes. And, well, some of them kept on working, but you just took it for granted. Because if a young man had a job and then he was drafted, his employer was expected to put him back to work when he got out of the service.

KL: I see. If a man and a woman were working at the same place and doing the same job, would they be paid the same or was

there quite a difference in - ?

Hixenbaugh: No, because the man was considered the head of the family, and they figured that any woman, even if she was the sole supporter of her children or her family, a woman was considered, well, they're still kind of second-rate class citizens. He was considered the breadwinner and anything that the woman made was considered gravy, which wasn't always true. But that was just the way employers figured.

KL: What did women do? Did they talk among themselves about the unfairness of that, or was there anything organized?

Hixenbaugh: Not too much; I don't think too much because they just expected it. They would gripe about how much they were making, but not the unfairness of it. They didn't expect to make as much as men. But they did have a lot of ways of getting around things, I mean to -

KL: Such as?

Hixenbaugh: Well, of course, you could step on somebody else on your way up, or something--just like the men do.

KL: That's true. How 'bout if a husband and wife worked at the same place? Would they - ?

Hixenbaugh: Well, a lot of times neither of them would make quite as good a wage because it was considered that they didn't need that much if they were both working. Now, that wasn't with everybody, but it was common.

KL: Okay. Going back to your son. When he was a child and you compare children today, do you see any difference in discipline or the way children were brought up then versus the way they are today?

Hixenbaugh: Well, yes. I think as far as discipline--I think what we used to call discipline, they'd call child abuse now. Because, when I spanked my son, and sometimes I think of the things I did, I think my gosh if that was now I'd be arrested for child abuse. And I kind of go along with it in a way, I think. But, see, that's the way I was raised. If I did - I got whacked on the legs or something with a switch.

KL: What about dating in high school age students? Do you think - you mentioned riding in a rumble seat and that type of thing. What was it like to be dating? Do you think kids are more permissive today than they were back then?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I don't know whether the word is permissive--I think kids of today are more open about things. I think everybody's pretty much the same as they are today.

KL: What about when girls got pregnant back then? What would they do?

Hixenbaugh: Well, they had - 'Course if they had enough money, there was no problem. There were a few doctors around that took pity on them. And there was also quacks around in places where girls often ended up in the hospital because they had gone to somebody else. Also, I can remember girls who had their appendixes out several times. It was just covered up. It was something else.

KL: Okay, well, we were kind of talking about working women in this portion. Can you tell us about your dancing a little bit? What kinds of, you know, were there stag parties back

then when you danced? Was it, you know, like we think about it today or - ?

Hixenbaugh: Well, I - You mean was I a stripper? I wasn't a stripper, but I worked with strippers sometimes; and the first time I was a little bit shocked, but I used to do Oriental numbers and I did the hula. Well, you just - that's what you do at a stag party, I mean.

KL: Were the stag parties really wild then? Once they were.

Hixenbaugh: No, no. That's a funny thing. I mean, people think sex. Well, I don't know how wild they were among themselves, but as far as the girls who worked for them--I mean the entertainment--nobody was ever out of line with you. And you usually had someone, whoever hired you, usually had someone around to see that nobody bothered you.

KL: We mentioned remembering the Douglas Starch Works explosion when you were a child. What was it like when that occurred?

Hixenbaugh: Well, the thing I remember about it, I was staying at school--with the nuns. When I was going up the stairs--we lived up over the school--and on the first landing, I just reached the first landing, and there was a big window above it, and it shook with the explosion. It just knocked me down. And I couldn't figure out what happened, but we found out afterward. 'Course, everybody was rushing down to see. It blew men out of the windows. Well, I guess it was a case of somebody turning water on a hot boiler or something like that, and it just went out the window.

KL: Oh, my God! That must have been horrible! How about bank closings? Do you remember anything about the banks?

Hixenbaugh: Yes, I do remember some bank closings. I remember there was a Cornbelt Bank. Where was it at? Downtown, but I don't remember just where. The banks we had then - there was a Cedar Rapids Savings Bank. I remember because I had a dollar and a half in that bank that I never got. We used to have Christmas Club, you know, and I had that much left on my Christmas Club. There used to be a bank, I think it was the American Trust. The "white bank," everybody called it. It was the building - I don't know what they call it now. It's on First Avenue and Second Street. I remember when the Merchants was built. Merchants used to be where the - I don't remember right now. Seems to me the original Merchants was where the parking area is now. It was a small bank, and then they built the big bank. And the Guaranty now - they was something else then. We didn't have too many banks in Cedar Rapids that closed. I remember the Cornbelt Bank folded, but it was a small bank.

KL: Okay, we also talked before about the end of World War I. Can you remember anything about what happened when that happened?

Hixenbaugh: Yes. When we got word the war was over - 'course, now I don't remember how long that was after the war was over, because we didn't have radio or anything then. But everybody took to the streets, went downtown and they had dancing in the streets. The whole town when downtown, and



they sent big trucks out to the - to pick kids up in the schools and load them on the trucks, drove around town, and everybody just drove around, hollered and yelled. I don't know why.

KL: It must have been a big celebration.

Hixenbaugh: Yeah, it really was.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH

MARY HIXENBAUGH