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JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Frances Halpin

Conducted by Molly Eovino
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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)
- 9 --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

- 16 --Motion Pictures
- 43-44 --Cedar Rapids Parks
- 17-19 --Dances
- 19 --Carnival Week
- Chautauqua
- 26 --Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- Symphony Orchestra
- Circus
- 15 --Greene's Opera House
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)
- 14-- May's Island

2. Famous Characters

- 15 --Cherry Sisters
- Grant Wood
- Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- 23-24 --Marvin Cone

3. Lifestyle

- Life before air conditioning
- 4 --Winter Activities
- 43-45 --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
- 25,27-28--Prejudice against Catholicism

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

- 5,6,7--Cedar Rapids Schools
- 21-23,25--Coe College
 - Mount Mercy College
 - Cornell College
- 21--Contometer Company's School

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

- 28-30 --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)
- 11-12,35-42,48-49 --Businesses that no longer exist (old groceries, drygoods, icehouses) /Witwer Grocery
- 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
- 30 --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)
- 52 --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

Frances Lilly Halpin was born in Cedar Rapids in 1907. She is the daughter of Lawrence Francis Halpin (an Irish immigrant) and Jessie Louise Lilly (of Ohio). A Catholic, she attended St. Patrick's School for twelve years, graduating in 1925. She graduated from Coe College in 1929. Her career positions have included employment at Wilson Foods, Collins and Witwer Grocery Company.

ME: Where were you born?

Halpin: I was born in Cedar Rapids.

ME: In what year?

Halpin: 1907.

ME: Were you born at home or in a hospital?

Halpin: I was born at home.

ME: Were there any attending physicians?

Halpin: Oh, a doctor was there.

ME: Do you remember who it was?

Halpin: I think her name--it was a lady doctor--I think her name was Dr. Webb. I don't remember her of course.

ME: No, okay. And you have lived in Cedar Rapids all your life?

Halpin: That's right.

ME: What were your parent's names?

Halpin: Lawrence Francis Halpin was my father. Jessie Louise Lilly was my mother.

ME: Where did they come from?

Halpin: My father was born in Ireland, in Drogheda, Ireland and came over

before he was a year old with his twin sister and Mother and Father. And my mother was born in Cedar Rapids and lived here all her life.

ME: When was she born in Cedar Rapids? Do you know what year she was born?

Halpin: Oh, I'd have to stop and figure it out.

ME: Now you have had a chance to figure it out. When do you think she was born?

Halpin: I think in 1877.

ME: Did she ever mention anything to you about her early days in Cedar Rapids?

Halpin: No. I just know that she graduated from Washington High School.

ME: Down by Greene Square.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Okay. What did her parents do?

Halpin: I really can't remember. Her father and mother came to live with us when I was about three years old and my grandfather, her father, died just a year or so after they came. But my grandmother, her mother, lived with us until I was twenty six.

ME: And did you ever remember her saying anything about

Halpin: She came (my grandmother Lilly) to Iowa in a covered wagon and

her father and two other men had come out to Iowa a year before and homesteaded, and then they went back to bring their families to Iowa. And one man had to stand guard duty at night because of the Indians.

ME: Now that would have been prior to 1877?

Halpin: Oh, yes. Several. She was a little girl.

ME: Iowa came a state in about 1845, I think. Would it have been a state or a territory at that point?

Halpin: I don't know. One thing I remember; I was reading a novel, and my grandmother was sitting on the porch with me. And the novel was about a family that came out from the East in a covered wagon and what not. And that's the first time I had any question about where grandmother came from. And I said where were you born Grandma? And she was born in Zanesfield, Ohio, and so then I said, "How did you get out to Iowa?" And she said, "in a covered wagon," and she told me this story. And I thought she must be dreaming; I went in the house and asked Mother. Mother said, "well, that's all true."

ME: Now, is that the picture you have hanging in your hallway?

Halpin: No, that's my grandfather's mother.

ME: That's your great-grandmother that would be my great, great-grand mother. My!

Halpin: Yes. That's right.

ME: I hope you have a name on that picture.

Halpin: I have.

ME: You have one other brother.

Halpin: Just one brother. That's all I had.

ME: Lawrence. And he was born two years after you so that would be 1910.

Halpin: No, 1909.

ME: 1909. You were born in 1907. Okay. Where did you grow up?

Halpin: I grew up on the west side near Fillmore School.

ME: Do you remember the address?

Halpin: Yes, 807 C Avenue N.W.

ME: And you can still find the house?

Halpin: Oh, Yes. I go by there so often.

ME: Do you have any quick memories about that particular area?

Halpin: Yes. It was a nice place to grow up. In the wintertime there was a huge, square empty block called Chandler's Field, and they flooded that every winter. And that's where we would ice skate from early morning to late at night. And in the summertime then there were baseball games there. It was fun living

ME: Now how far was that from your house?

Halpin: About a half a block.

ME: Do you know what's there now?

Halpin: Yes. Universal Crusher built--I don't know who is in that big building and occupying all that land now, but that's who did it first.

ME: But there's still a big building there?

Halpin: Yes. There's a factory or something there now.

ME: And you went to school?

Halpin: I went to school--grade school--and high school at Saint Pat's Parochial School, Saint Patrick's School.

ME: The one that still there on First Avenue.

Halpin: Yes. It's on A Avenue behind Saint Patrick's Church.

ME: So you went through all your formative years at Saint Pat's.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Do you remember any of your teachers? Did you ever keep in contact with any of your teachers?

Halpin: No. Not in recent years. And my music sister that I took music from was Sister Mary Christine. She was a sweet, sweet person, not too old. One time in my senior year I went from my lesson, and she said, "Let's not take the lesson. I want to talk to you." And I said, "Sister, if you want to talk to me about being a nun,

we'd better take the lesson."

ME: And was that what she had wanted.

Halpin: Yes. She said all right.

ME: So you graduated from Saint Pat's?

Halpin: Yes. In 1925.

ME: So 12 years at Saint Pat's.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Your friends when you were growing up, did they all go to Saint Pat's or. . .

Halpin: Well see that was a Catholic school, and that's where I made my friends when I went to Saint Pat's. I have two that are still living that were real good friends. We have dinner together about every other month.

ME: What other high schools were in Cedar Rapids at that time?

Halpin: Washington and Grant. Washington was on the east side, and Grant Vocational School was on the west side.

ME: Where was this?

Halpin: It was on Second Avenue and Sixth Street West. The building still stands, but I can't remember who's there.

ME: The Board of Education Building.

Halpin: I think so. Yes.

ME: And it was a vocational school?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: So if you wanted to just go to high school, you'd go across the river to Washington.

Halpin: Yes. If you wanted to take a regular course, then you get out at eighth grade and then go to Grant or Washington. But if you went to Grant then you were learning a trade at that time.

ME: Where did you brother go to school?

Halpin: He graduated from Saint Pat's too. And then...

ME: So only two years after you...

Halpin: Yes. And then by that time I was going to Coe, and he went to Coe for one or two years and went to Iowa. He was going to take medicine, which he did.

ME: I'm going to backtrack for just a minute. What did your father do as an occupation?

Halpin: Why, he was a telegrapher operator.

ME: Will you explain what that is?

Halpin: Well, he works at little machines who send wires, and he always, I think, worked for a railroad. And after I was growing up, he became a wire chief, and he held that position until he retired.

ME: Was there any particular railroad he worked for longer than another?

Halpin: The Rock Island. I think that would be the last one where he retired from there.

ME: They were all in Cedar Rapids though?

Halpin: Oh, no. He traveled all over when he was young. He worked for so long for one railroad and stop and to up the line and get a job with another.

ME: So then was your mother at home alone with you two?

Halpin: Oh, no. This was when he was a young man. After he was married, why he stayed right in Cedar Rapids. He settled down. Yes.

ME: Did your mother work outside the home?

Halpin: Not after she was married, but she graduated from Washington High School, and I think she went to business college. And she worked at the Western Union, and that is where she and my father met. He was working there too.

ME: Here in Cedar Rapids?

Halpin: Yes. Here in Cedar Rapids.

ME: What did she do there? Do you know?

Halpin: I don't know. I think she was either a stenographer or a bookkeeper. I can't remember.

ME: Some of the earlier days of Cedar Rapids that you perhaps might remember. Do you remember, for example, the, I want to say the railway system that went up the middle of the street? What was that?

Halpin: The streetcars. Oh, yes. Those were are only mode of transportation until Henry Ford's cars came out.

ME: And you remember horse and buggies?

Halpin: Oh, yes, indeed I do.

ME: I made a mention of that and you...

Halpin: Yes.

ME: What did you have? Your family?

Halpin: Oh. Well, our first car (we never had a horse and buggy) but our first car was a Maxwell.

ME: What year was that model?

Halpin: Oh, I had to be in high school so that would be in the early 1920's. And my father worked odd hours, I think from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. at times, and so when we bought this car my mother learned to drive first. And then Father drove. And in those days every Sunday afternoon you went for a ride if you had a car. And my brother and I when they say, "Come on let's go for a ride." We say, "Who's gonna drive?" And if Dad would say he was we'd say, "We're not going."

ME: Why?

Halpin: Because Mother is a better driver. So then he'd say, "Oh, Mother will drive. Come on."

ME: And would he let her?

Halpin: Well sure.

ME: So but you said something about the streetcars were your main mode of transportation. How'd you get to Coe?

Halpin: Oh, we had moved on the east side then.

ME: When did you move to the east side?

Halpin: The year before I started to Coe. That would be like 1925 or along in there.

ME: So it would have been right after, right around the time you graduated from Saint Pat's?

Halpin: Yes. Just a year or so after that and maybe right soon. I can't remember.

ME: And that was over at 17...

Halpin: 1731 Fourth Avenue.

ME: Southeast?

Halpin: Yes, and I lived there until just about eight or nine years ago.

ME: Why did your parents decide to move across town?

Halpin: Well, they wanted to before, but they hated to take us out of school that we gone to. So just as soon as my brother graduated too. He graduated a year after I did from Saint Pat's.

ME: Even though he was two years younger than you?

Halpin: Yes, because he skipped a grade.

ME: And so they had wanted to move across town?

Halpin: Yes. For a long time.

ME: Was that an area that was . . .

Halpin: No. It was a nice part of town at that time. There was a little grocery store a block from us that you wouldn't find that all the time, but

ME: East end? Wasn't that East end?

Halpin: No. Yes. East end drugstore that was a couple blocks away, but this was a grocery store that was just a block away or so.

ME: And isn't that where now the metro high school has one of their. . .

Halpin: Oh, they might. I don't know.

ME: And you had a fire engine house just a couple houses away there. . . on the corner?

Halpin: A fire--where they kept fire engines?

ME: There on the corner of Fourth Avenue and

Halpin: Oh, well I still talking about the west side. You'd talking about the east side.

ME: I'm sorry, and I'm talking about the east side.

Halpin: Yes. Oh, well, there was Hladky's Grocery Store was two blocks from us after we moved, and a drug store, East End Pharmacy was behind Hladky's. And the firehouse was just at the end of the block from where we lived.

ME: Was that there when you moved in?

Halpin: Oh, yes.

ME: And that's were metro high school has buildings now. Okay, or at least it used to have buildings.

Halpin: Yes. That's right. We moved from the west side to the east side the first year I went to Coe.

ME: So you were relatively close to Coe in comparison. How did you get to school?

Halpin: Oh, we walked. It was about seven blocks.

ME: In the middle of winter?

Halpin: Oh, I can't remember that.

ME: So did you ever get to ride the trollies or the Inter Urban?

Halpin: Oh, yes. We'd go to Mount Vernon on it.

ME: What would you do in Mount Vernon?

Halpin: I can't remember whether we had friends. One we went to Iowa City on it for some reason or another.

ME: In that book about Cedar Rapids that Ralph Clements wrote, there is the picture of the man and the old Model T, and he's kind of going sideways on the old, muddy road that was Old Lincoln Highway. Isn't that Mount Vernon Road now?

Halpin: Well, yes. I think it is.

ME: Do you remember the deep mud?

Halpin: I never got stuck in the mud, but I remember a football game in Iowa City in the fall. That on the way home it had rained all afternoon, and the cars were stuck on both sides of the road almost to Cedar Rapids.

ME: When you were living on the west side of town, did you find that a lot of things were going on the east side of town so you were having to cross the river?

Halpin: Oh, yes. Sure we . . .

ME: Like daily or . . .

Halpin: To go to the movies or . . .

ME: Everything was on the east side?

Halpin: Well, yeah, mostly. There was . . .

ME: Was Kingston still separate or was it part of Cedar Rapids?

Halpin: I don't remember that.

ME: Well, then it must have been part of Cedar Rapids. Assuming that's where Kingston Stadium is now. It used to be

Halpin: Well, it was named after a little township.

ME: When you were crossing the river, were all the bridges as they are now?

Halpin: Well and some have been replaced.

ME: But were they in the same places that they are now?

Halpin: Yes. I think so.

ME: What about May's Island?

Halpin: It's always been there.

ME: Why I know that. What I mean was there used to be--first there was an amusement park on it, I think.

Halpin: That could be, and I remember we went swimming in the Cedar River right near May's Island when I was a little girl. There was a beach and a lifeguard.

ME: Do you remember where in proximity?

Halpin: Yeah, at the end.

ME: Of the island?

Halpin: Yes. Well, between Third and Fourth Avenue maybe.

ME: What else was on the island at that time besides beach?

Halpin: I think the police station always was. I can't be sure.

ME: The jail?

Halpin: The jail. Yes.

ME: Let's talk about what you did for recreation. You had mentioned to me something that you remembered the Cherry sisters.

Halpin: I don't think I ever saw them perform, but we read about them a lot. And only thing I can remember is that they had a bakery on Third Avenue West, and it was a real good. The bread was just delicious, and I think they had a pretty good business.

ME: Was this before or after they became a

Halpin: After they had been on the stage and what not.

ME: They came back to Cedar Rapids then?

Halpin: Yes. And it was just a little bakery.

ME: Did you frequent it or did you--

Halpin: No. Just once in a great while.

ME: Did you ever get to go to Green's Opera House?

Halpin: Oh, yes. When I was

ME: Do you remember the acts that you saw there?

Halpin: No. I don't. But anyway I'd be when I was growing up.

ME: Did it impress you as being grand?

Halpin: Yes, I thought it was real nice.

ME: Where were the motion picture houses?

Halpin: Well, When my brother was in high school, he was an usher at the Strand Theater.

ME: Where is that now?

Halpin: That's the one that's near the tracks on Third Avenue.

ME: So that's what used to be The World.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: And it is closed now. He was an usher at the Strand.

Halpin: Then I remember when the first time I went to the Paramount. Oh, it was gorgeous.

ME: Do you remember about what year that would have been?

Halpin: Oh, no. I would be in high school, I think. That would have been in 1920's maybe. And there was a little theater before my brother ushered. He was quite an usher. Before he ushered at The World or the Strand, he ushered for a couple years at the Isis Theater which is where the Western Union is now.

ME: Where's that?

Halpin: Western Union is right by the Witwer Building on Second Avenue.

ME: All right, near the beauty college.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: There used to be a theater there?

Halpin: Yes. The Isis Theater, and he ushered there for--oh, you know, a matter of a year or so.

ME: Do you remember perhaps about how much he would have been paid an hour?

Halpin: Well not too much, but then everybody was in the same situation.

ME: This was before the depression.

Halpin: Before the depression, yes. The depression came in the late, well like in the '30's.

ME: What would you do for fun when you were growing up and as a young woman?

Halpin: We'd go swimming as I said, and there was a beach at Ellis Park too. And we'd go up there, and we went to dances. They don't go to dances like we used to.

ME: Where would you go?

Halpin: There was Danceland and Dreamland and Cedar Park.

ME: I think I have hit on something, now you seem to remember those. Okay Danceland is generally about where the Interstate is now, isn't it?

Halpin: Yes, it's up North Third Street on the second floor, and did they turn it in to Dreamland or maybe Dreamland turned into Danceland.

ME: Could have been because I remember Danceland.

Halpin: And then a great place in the summertime was Manhatten Beach out north past Ellis Park, and it was open air. And they had good orchestras out there, and it was fun going to a dance out there.

ME: So you're talking about toward Edgewood Road?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Manhatten

Halpin: Beach they called it. There was no beach, but, I mean it was all like swampland in there with the road going through it and then we'd come to Manhatten.

ME: And would they have ...

Halpin: Good orchestras and yes people would ...

ME: What kind of dancing did you do?

Halpin: Well, the fox trot and waltzes and no jitter bugging in those days.

ME: Why?

Halpin: Well, it wasn't in vogue yet.

ME: What year are you talking about---I'm not quite sure?

Halpin: Oh, I'm talking about 1930's.

ME: What about the Charleston?

Halpin: Yeah, well that came a little before. I remember that my brother learned to do the Charleston at Saint Pat's School in the rest-room standing and hanging on both sides of the stall. Do you know what I mean?

ME: Yeah.

Halpin: And whoever was teaching (what boy was teaching him) would show him how to do it and while they were learning they'd hang on each side. He was a good dancer.

ME: Did he teach you?

Halpin: Oh, I suppose he did. I can't remember.

ME: Do you remember something called carnival week?

Halpin: No. But they would have street carnivals when I was growing up.

ME: What's a street carnival?

Halpin: It would be like maybe take up the whole Second Avenue bridge, and there would be a--what were those places called you'd go in, and they'd scare you and. . .

ME: A fun house.

Halpin: Yeah. A fun house, and then there would be different rides.

ME: Do you remember the Alamo? The amusement park.

Halpin: No. I think it was way over on the west side, but it was kind of before my time, I think.

ME: Did you ever go to camp?

Halpin: No, I never did. They didn't have camps when I was little. Boy Scouts had camp. The boys had camp from the Y and what not, but I don't think any girls while I was growing up.

ME: How about the YWCA and the YMCA?

Halpin: They were very active, but since I was at a Sister's school I didn't have much connection with the YW.

ME: Were they more religiously affiliated at that time?

Halpin: No, but I mean the nuns kept us busy.

ME: Let's move on to Coe College. You started at Coe?

Halpin: Yes. In 19--, I graduated from high school in 1925, and I worked a year.

ME: Where?

Halpin: At the Rock Island payroll office, and I went to Davenport and took a six-weeks course to learn how to run a contometer.

ME: Was that before or after Coe?

Halpin: That was after high school, and that . . .

ME: Wait a minute. You need to explain what a contometer.

Halpin: Well. that's an adding machine that you don't pull a crank after each entry.

ME: So it automatically. . .

Halpin: So it automatically added, and I got to be a whizz on it.

ME: Do you remember the name of the school you went to in Davenport?

Halpin: Yeah, the Contometer Company's School. I went down stayed six weeks in Davenport, and I had a promise that I'd have a job at the Rock Island office when I got back. And I did, and it really put me through school--through college.

ME: So you worked your way through school?

Halpin: Well, practically. No, I couldn't have done it I wasn't living at home. I didn't pay any board and room or anything like that, but it paid my tuition and clothed me.

ME: When you were at Coe, you went four full years?

Halpin: Yes, I did.

ME: What were your majors?

Halpin: I majored in Speech and minored in English.

ME: To become a teacher?

Halpin: Yes. That's what--well that's what all girls became in those days. You know, took courses in education because that's what a college girl would do.

ME: Do you remember how much it cost?

Halpin: No, I don't, but it wouldn't be I

ME: But you were able to pay for it working part time at the Rock Island.

Halpin: Yes, I just worked when I was going to school. I just worked when somebody in the office wanna have a weeks' vacation that they weren't entitled to, and I worked for them.

ME: And doing just that you paid for your school?

Halpin: Yeah. I saved every bit though to do it, and the reason I stayed out a year is because my brother was a grade behind me and so he would be going to college that next year. So we started at Coe the same year, and we went two years. And we'd had moved over to the east side.

And I can tell you a funny story. Just recently, about maybe the last two years, in the elevator at Blairhouse there was a woman who was in college when I was at Coe, and she said, "Frances, I had a big argument about you the other day." And I said, "What was that?" And she said, "My name was mentioned" and Gail, this lady, said, Oh, yes, I knew Frances and her twin brother when I went to Coe." And whoever that she was talking to said, "Why they aren't twins." And she said, "Well they certainly are." And she said, "I just thought sure you were twin because you both came the same year."

ME: And you were two years apart?

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: Did you recollect?

Halpin: No, I don't think we did.

ME: So you waited for your brother, and you'd go together.

Halpin: Yes, and we went together.

ME: Who were some of your teachers at Coe? Do you remember any of them?

Halpin: I took French and Art Appreciation. from Marvin Cone. And Laura Peril Stewart was head of the speech department, and Wanita Lacer taught in that department. A Miss Lambert was my English Teacher.

ME: Would you have these same teachers for more than one class through the four years?

Halpin: No. Well, I would maybe in the speech department cause that was my major, but not. I can't think who taught me English.

ME: Marvin Cone taught you French also.

Halpin: Yes. He would say to me, "Mademoiselle Halpin," in French he'd say, "Mademoiselle Halpin open the door." And I'd get up and close the window. I couldn't understand it, but I could always, if it was written, I could translate it. But I had a awful time.

ME: What do you remember about Marvin Cone? Since he's famous let's touch on him.

Halpin: He was a wonderful teacher, had a good sense of humor, and it was fun to be in his class.

ME: Was he much older than you?

Halpin: Oh, yeah. He'd been teaching for several years, and there was also a teacher, (I can't think of his name now) I took debating from him. I was the only girl in that class, and his name was Mr. Sillimon. He would come in and say, "Good morning Lady and Gentlemen," every morning. I got so tired of hearing that.

ME: Now why were you the only woman in the class?

Halpin: Because it was a debating class, and I don't suppose girls were interested.

ME: Did you meet any eligible men because of it?

Halpin: Oh, no. I wasn't looking.

ME: I might want to note at this time that you're still single. You've never been married.

Halpin: I have never been married, no.

ME: Did you ever get to meet or see or have anything to do with some of the other famous people from Cedar Rapids; like Grant Wood?

Halpin: No. I never met Grant Wood.

ME: How about Carl VanVecten?

Halpin: Oh he's way ahead of my time.

ME: Well, right but did you ever study any of his writings?

Halpin: No.

ME: What year did The Tatooed Countess come out?

Halpin: Oh, I can't tell you that.

ME: Do you remember anything about?

Halpin: No.

ME: So while you were at Coe you were learning how to be a teacher?

What happened your senior year?

Halpin: I had all my credentials, and it was foregone conclusion that girls taught school if they had gone to college, and I sent out my resumes to several towns and one day the Professor Anderson called me in to his office, and he wanted to talk to me. He said, "Frances, I think you'd better change your mind about teaching because you're never going to get a teaching job, and it's because you are a Catholic." And I had never run into that situation until I went to Coe.

ME: Now it wasn't because it was Coe?

Halpin: No.

ME: It was because

ME: It was the sign of the times and so I went right--he said, "What did you do before you came to Coe?" And I said, "Why I was a confometer operator." And he said, "Why don't you go back and do

that." And I did.

ME: So generally your education for a new profession, was it wasted?

I mean not wasted, but

Halpin: Oh, no. I. . .

ME: You went back to what you'd been doing before.

Halpin: That's right, but I had the experience of college, and I enjoyed what I learned, and I was in a lot of community plays that would have been because I was a speech major you know.

ME: Down at community theater?

Halpin: Yeah. That's the one that became Cedar Rapids Community Theater.

ME: Do you remember any of the people that you were acting with?

Halpin: Yeah. Well, while what I was doing. I was never in a play with him, but he was in plays at the same time I was down before and a

ME: Do you remember Max Hahn?

Halpin: Oh yes, of course I do. It was fun --a lot of fun. I enjoyed that immensely.

ME: What would you do in the theater? What would you do?

Halpin: I'd take a part in a play.

ME: So you have stage experience.

Halpin: Yes. That's right. I was in an original play with Bud Lattner

and oh, it was fun, but that was after I was out of Coe, and I was working.

ME: This was part of your recreational interest then?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Instead of going to the plays, you would be in the plays.

Halpin: Yes.

ME: And you remained living at home with your parents during all this time?

Halpin: Yes, I did.

ME: And after while basically it wasn't you living with your parents, it was your parents living with you?

Halpin: No, but I was taking care of both of my parents. Then when I got to be in my late 30's I had to quit working (by that time I was working at Collins. It was right after the war) because my mother was sick, and my father had retired and wasn't well. So I lived at home. And my dad's twin, my Aunt Margaret, came to live with us to help us. My parents died in the same year (both of them died in the same year) and then Aunt Margaret lived on with me for seven years before she died.

ME: Well we'll get back to that in just a minute cause and remind me too because I want to touch on that. But just to finish out this experience with prejudice that you had with the religion. Did you ever come across that religious prejudice again after that?

Halpin: No. I never did. Things got all right, but I had never had it before, and I never had it again.

ME: Here comes a leading question--did you ever have any other experience with any other kind of prejudice?

Halpin: No, not that I...

ME: Like being a woman.

Halpin: No. Oh, yes. After I got out of college, I went back to be a contometer operator. And I went to Wilson and Company.

ME: What was it called then?

Halpin: It was called, well, T. M. Sinclair. And I

ME: Now this would have been what year? 19--

Halpin: 1930.

ME: The depression had hit?

Halpin: Oh, yes. And I worked in the office where Mr. Johnson had been sent out by Wilson and Company to manage the office, and I was hired. My salary when I started was \$60 a month.

ME: \$60.00?

Halpin: That's right. And I was very happy to have a job. The depression was here. But Mr. Johnson promised me that I would have a 10 percent cut--I mean a 10 percent raise--after I had been three months, and when the three months were up, I had three 10 percent

cuts along with everybody in the office.

ME: And you still were very happy to just have your job.

Halpin: Well, my nephew David after he got out of college, I was telling him.

ME: Which would have been about 1968.

Halpin: Yeah. I was telling him about my experience with my first job, and he said, "Aunt Franny, if they had only paid you \$60 a month, why did you stay on?" I said, "David, there were no other jobs." And he couldn't believe me. I was lucky to have a job. Well, then shall I tell my story about Europe?

ME: No. I want to finish. Now when you first started you were at T. M. Sinclair. How long were you there before it changed over to Wilsons?

Halpin: Well, I think he had changed before I went.

ME: Okay. So Mr. Johnson was already working there.

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: Now what I want you to do is I want you to tell the story about how you would train people and what happened. Remember we're still talking about the prejudice here?

Halpin: While I was working at Wilson and Company, I figured on the con-
tometer all the beef tests.

ME: The bee tests? Or the beef tests?

Halpin: Well, they would be after they killed the beef. They'd send me up some statistics, and I had to finish out the test. They gave that job to a man that they hired, and I taught him.

ME: The beef test?

Halpin: How to do the beef test and while I was working for him he very talkative and told me how much money he was getting. And it was about maybe $2\frac{1}{2}$ times more than I was getting.

ME: And you had taught him.?

Halpin: Yeah. And I was teaching him. Well, he quit. They hired another one, and I had to teach him how to do it. He didn't like it and he quit. And when they were going to hire the third man, I went to Mr. Johnson. And I said, "All right this will be the third man that I have taught that job. Why can't you give me that job, and the salary that goes with it? And he said, "Because you're a woman."

ME: What did you respond?

Halpin: Well, that's too bad. So in about a year my brother was in town opened his medical practice and after he got going he asked me if I wouldn't like to work for him. And I worked for him. I quit my job, and Mr. Johnson said to me, "It'll never work. You just can't work with relatives." And my brother and I got along just great, and I enjoyed it a lot.

ME: How much were you paid when you were working for your brother?

Halpin: When we started he said, "I can't pay you too much Frances," and I said, "I don't care if you don't pay me for a while." Because I was so happy to be out and so for a while he gave me maybe \$10 a week--wrote a check for \$10 or so. I think, I can't remember if I even made a point to cash them right away, anyway he gave me a raise, and I didn't look at that check, and I put it in my purse. And about three days later he said, "Did you cash your check?" And I said, "Why, no." He said, "Didn't you even look at it?" And I looked at it, and he had given me a nice raise. And he said, "That's the last one you'll get for a long time."

ME: How many years did you work for Wilson's then?

Halpin: Seven years.

ME: You were making \$60 when you started.

Halpin: Then we got raises towards the end of that service. I can't remember what my final paycheck was, but I saved enough money on that little paycheck for three years, and I went to Europe.

ME: What year did you go to Europe?

Halpin: 1933. Of course the . . .

ME: Tell a short story about going to Europe.

Halpin: What's a short story?

ME: Well how much and how long.

Halpin: I asked for a leave of absence for 2½ months because a trip to Europe in those days was two to three months cause you went by boat and all that. Do you want me to tell about Mr. Johnson? Oh, no. I know. The whole trip we visited nine countries, and we had to get ourselves to Montreal and back again.

ME: You left from Montreal?

Halpin: Yes. On the ship and the whole trip cost me about \$450 and that included the hotel charges, all our meals, and any sightseeing trips and all that.

ME: Mr. Johnson let you have the 2½ months?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: So you saved all through the depression?

Halpin: All through those first three years after I got out of college. I saved that money to go.

ME: When you went did you go through a travel agency? How did you set it up?

Halpin: No, see I went through--it was a Reverend Pratt's tour. He was the minister at the People's Church at that time, and he had groups of traveled people who worked for him in the summer taking groups of people to Europe. During the depression it had fallen off terribly, and so when I went there were six young ladies and four leaders. Four people expected to take a group, and so the six of us we just had a wee of a time because if we

wanted to go someplace where somebody else didn't want to there was always a grown up to go with us. You know an experienced person.

ME: How old were you?

Halpin: I was twenty four or so.

ME: Because you say a grown up. I'm just. . .

Halpin: Yeah, but then I mean I wouldn't have known how to get anyplace.

ME: So you went through the People's Church then? They arranged all

Halpin: No. Reverend Pratt did, and we would see him in Europe once in a while. We'd come into the dining room in the hotel, and there he is sitting waiting for us. But these four grown ups, you know, were working for him. But it was a wonderful trip.

ME: Well now, you had gone to Saint Pat's and graduated, you had honestly gone to church there. When you moved over to the east side of town, you joined what?

Halpin: Immaculate Conception Church.

ME: And how long were you a member of that church?

Halpin: Oh my heavens! Well, fifty years I was. Then I moved to Blair-house, and now I go to Saint Matthew's Church.

ME: As a point of reference in time, Immaculate Conception just had an auction on their school.

Halpin: I read that.

ME: Do you have any quick memories about Immaculate Conception as a church or a school?

Halpin: I remember that I was in a play. At Immaculate Conception they must had a young group of society or something, and I had the leading part in "Merton of the Movies." A play that we put on there.

ME: "Merton of the Movies?"

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: Spell Merton.

Halpin: M-e-r-t-o-n. "Merton of the Movies."

ME: While you were working for you brother.

Halpin: While I was working for my brother why he was called to service because he was a reserve officer, and so I had to close his office.

ME: What year would this have been?

Halpin: That would have been, oh like 1939, 1940 or so. And I then got a position at Collins. They were hiring everybody, and I was in the Payroll Department. And I worked there for two or three years until my mother began ill, and I quit to take care of her. And I was at home for two or three years, and then my father and mother both died in the same year.

ME: What year?

Halpin: 1947. And then I went to work at Witwer Grocer Company for Weaver.

ME: What year did you start at Witwers?

Halpin: Oh, I wish I had a calendar or some notes. I started--they died in '47, and I started working for him in '47.

ME: Where was his office? Where was your office?

Halpin: My office was in the old Post Office building on the second floor, but his office and warehouse office was down on Third Street and Ninth Avenue.

ME: So you're saying that your office was on the second floor of what is now the Witwer's Senior Center.

Halpin: That's right.

ME: Which as I remember was a courtroom.

Halpin: Yes. We were in the judge's courtroom, and it was a beautiful, beautiful, great big room, and the doors in the back that went out to storage space and the bathrooms, said, "Judge's Quarters" on them. They never changed them.

ME: Do you know offhand how Weaver came to have the government building?

Halpin: He bought it. It was a Post Office.

ME: It was a Post Office, but honestly it was also the Courthouse or something. Why was it?

Halpin: Yeah. But they built the Courthouse I suppose in

ME: Right. Why if it was the Post Office why was there a courtroom upstairs?

Halpin: Well, for federal cases. I imagine.

ME: Okay. Sure. So in 1947 you had your desk on the side of the courtroom, and you used the judge's chambers.

Halpin: Yeah, for our restroom and bathroom and what not.

ME: And your. . .

Halpin: Filing.

ME: Filing room.

Halpin: And then a. . .

ME: Well, go from there--tell us about Witwer Grocery--whatever history you can remember about whether it be Weaver or what you can say Weaver's holdings that a. . .

Halpin: Well, by the time I went to work for him, he had, I think owns more farms in Iowa than anybody else. I mean any one individual or I should say maybe more acres. I don't know, and a. . .

ME: Do you know how he started?

Halpin: Started out selling for like Western Grocer Company as a salesman.

ME: Now we're talking here about Weaver Witwer.

Halpin: Yes. And I can't tell you any of the dates because it'd be before I was born. I suppose. I don't know. Well, I was born in 1907, and I know he was more than seven years older than I am so I can't tell you when he was born, but he quite a corporation, and we had branches in Mason City and Madison, (Wisconsin) and Ottumwa.

ME: Branches of what?

Halpin: Of Witwer Grocer Company. In Iowa City we had about four or five branches.

ME: But do you know how--did he start out--was his family well off or did he. . .

Halpin: No.

ME: How did he acquire the acreage he had? Do you know?

Halpin: Why from making the money. He started out as a little, tiny wholesale grocer with a few accounts, and he kept building and building and opening branches, and I think we had five or six branches at one time.

ME: Around the Midwest?

Halpin: Yes, that's right.

ME: So when you started for him, he worked as a wholesale grocer?

Halpin: Yes, he was President of the company. But he worked just as hard as anybody.

ME: When did he start the Witwer Grocery Stores?

Halpin: That was when I started working for him. I started working in 1947, and I suppose two or three years after that he opened the first Witwer Farm Market. We call them "Me-Toos." Herbert Stamates made up that name.

END OF SIDE ONE BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

Halpin: Herbert and Weaver had lunch together a lot, and they were talking about what he would name this first store that he had and Herbert came up with the idea that Me-Too. Meaning that if anyone said, "Well, I paid so-and-so at such-and-such a place for this they'd say 'Me-Too.'" Meet the price, don't you see? And so that's how they named them.

ME: So they started out with Me-Too, and then Weaver went in business.

ME: Do you know where the stores were in town?

Halpin: Well, yes. The one on First Avenue in 16th Street was one of the first ones, yeah. And then when I was working in the Witwer building that's down on Second Avenue and Third Street, in the judge's quarters you know, why there was a store down there on the first floor. Yeah. Then I was working for him when he built every other one, and then, of course, all the ones from out of town. So he ended up-- he had farms, and turkey farms and you know he just had a lot interests and made a lot of money.

ME: Now, of course, having all those stores he had numerous employees, but how many employees did he have right there in his office? There was you and

Halpin: Oh, yes. We had about 20 girls up in the uptown office.

ME: Where was the uptown office?

Halpin: Well, where I ...

ME: Where you were.

Halpin: That used to be the Post Office. We always had about 20 girls cause we did the bookkeeping for all of the one of the stores out of town too.

ME: I don't remember there being 20 girls there. I always remember just you and Evy.

Halpin: Oh, Evelyn wasn't in my--she worked in the warehouse office down Weaver stayed.

ME: Well, maybe then it was you and Dorothy.

Halpin: Yeah. But and there were about seven girls down in Evelyn's office. So we had

ME: Now by Evelyn were talking about Evelyn Dunn. What was her position to Weaver?

Halpin: She was like the office manager for the warehouse office, and I was Accounts Payable. I paid all the checks, and all the paper-- all the wholesale groceries that we bought and paid for, the payroll and all that. It was great.

ME: Who would have been Weaver's right-hand man been?

Halpin: He had several. Benny Bradford worked in the office for a long time in a good position, and Ralph Whitlock. Oh, he had ten of them that, you know, at the branches and everything, and I couldn't mention all of them now. I couldn't remember.

ME: So he didn't have one, say for example if he was president of the company, vice president that was right there.

Halpin: No.

ME: Why?

Halpin: Well, he just didn't.

ME: He liked to handle the reins, didn't he?

Halpin: That's right.

ME: He was the "take charge" kind of guy.

Halpin: He had a brother who passed away years ago, and he was in the business with him at first, but then he died. And it was a nice place to work; he was awfully good to us.

ME: And how long did you work for Weaver?

Halpin: For 28 years.

ME: Until your retirement?

Halpin: Well, no. Weaver died.

ME: You were still working for him when he died?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: Which was 19--

Halpin: Two or three of us worked for a year or two after Weaver retired, but we didn't have the stores. He'd sold those.

ME: Who did he sell the stores to? What are the stores now?

Halpin: Well, I think maybe he sold some to Nash Finch. I can't remember.

ME: And what are their names now?

Halpin: I don't know.

ME: Hy-Vee.

Halpin: Oh, Hy-Vee. That's right.

ME: And Me-Too.

Halpin: Yeah. And oh, he had a partner when we had the Hy-Vee stores.

ME: He had the Hy-Vee stores?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: He called them Hy-Vee?

Halpin: And then when they separated, yeah we called them Hy-Vees, no when they separated then they were Me-Toos, the ones on the east side in Cedar Rapids became Witwer Farmer Markets, and the ones on the west side became Hy-Vees.

ME: About what year would this have been?

Halpin: That would be while Weaver will still going to the office every-day. Oh, I can't tell, about five years before we quit.

ME: Well, are we talking about the 1950's or the 1960's?

Halpin: 1960's I think.

ME: Now what year did Weaver die?

Halpin: He died about four years ago. He died in 1980 or '81, I think.

ME: And you worked for him for up until that time.

Halpin: And I worked for Witwer Grocer Company for one year after Weaver died. People's Bank asked three of us to keep on working until they could settle the estate.

ME: And where was your office at that point?

Halpin: At that time it was down in what had been the IOA Building which was our factory building.

ME: Where's that?

Halpin: Down by the old warehouse on Eighth or Ninth Avenue and Third Street. Well, we're almost to the end of my career.

ME: Well, let's go to some different things then. Let's deal with Cedar Rapids back in your younger days again then. Want me to to over my list?

Halpin: Yeah. I would if I can remember anything.

ME: Tell me about holidays in Cedar Rapids. How would Cedar Rapids celebrate the holidays, like Memorial Day and Fourth of July? Did they have parades and

Halpin: Oh, I think we went on picnics.

ME: Where would you go on your picnics?

Halpin: Ellis Park or Bever Park.

ME: Tell me (since I don't know Ellis as well as I know Bever) the landscape of Bever. You know--has it changed?

Halpin: Well, they didn't have any swimming pools when I was a little girl, of course, but they had--what do you slide down?

ME: A water slide?

Halpin: No, but

ME: Tobaggan run?

Halpin: Yes, like that, something like that, and there was the zoo out

there.

ME: The zoo is there? Where was the tobaggan run in relation to the zoo?

Halpin: Well, it would be, the one I remember I'm talking about like chute the chutes: not the tobaggan run. You know, you climbed up and slid down, and it would be if you went in the Grand Avenue entrance and there was one not too far from that (the entrance) on Grand Avenue.

ME: So you're talking about the one that's right there on the left where there's now a pavilion and some swing sets?

Halpin: Well, that could be, yeah.

ME: And the tennis courts are up above it?

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: What kind of animals did they have at the zoo?

Halpin: Oh, they had bears and monkeys, and I can't remember. Just think how many years ago that is.

ME: I know. What years are we talking about?

Halpin: Well, I don't know. It would have to be like in the 1912 or 1913.

ME: That long ago.

Halpin: Yeah, when I was a little girl.

ME: Well, the zoo must have been brand new back then.

Halpin: Yeah. That's right they probably aren't standing now.

ME: They aren't you're right. How about during the Fourth of July? Did they have big parades and things like that. You know like Music Man where they had the things

Halpin: Oh, no. But then there would be a celebration, and the Fourth of July the men that had been to war would march, the American Legion and all that. I remember one year we were invited to somebody's house for the Fourth of July, and my brother and I had our firecrackers. We each had a big sack of firecrackers, and you had punk in those days. Do you know what that is? You light it with the match and then it stays so that you can put all your firecrackers off of that piece of punk, you know. And so my brother and I were out shooting off our firecrackers when they called us to dinner, and so we brought our sack of firecrackers, (we both had one) up and put it on the porch and went in for dinner. Right in the midst of the meal all my firecrackers went off at one time. I hadn't put out the punk right.

ME: It scared the devil out of you didn't it?

Halpin: Yeah, that's right.

ME: Did your parents let you have firecrackers the next year after that?

Halpin: Oh, yeah. They said, "Well, you didn't out the punk right."

ME: This would have been when you were still living on the west side of town?

Halpin: Oh, yeah.

ME: So you'd be over by--what was it Chandler Park--is that what you called it?

Halpin: Chandler's Field.

ME: You said that you went ice skating over there as young girl?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: And you would--where would you go tobagganning? Would you go all the way across to Bever?

Halpin: No. We didn't tobaggan in those days. I didn't. We had hills some place or other, but one thing that we did do E Avenue west went straight out in the country for a long ways and if we had a nice snow, the farmers would come in on bob sleds and horses, you see, after supplies or something and we'd wait and hop on the runners and go way out in the country, and when we saw another one coming into town, we would jump and get a ride back into town.

ME: And they didn't mind you doing that?

Halpin: No.

ME: So when you say a bob sled are you talking about like big sleighs or . . .

Halpin: Yes. Well, they would haul lumber or something on them--that big, and the runners, you know, would be about 6' wide so we could jump on them, and they'd even slow down (the farmers would) and let us jump on and then if it was getting near noon or something the

farmer might say, that was driving the team, "You'd better hop this next sled that's coming." Because there may not be--it's getting noontime. See?

ME: They'd watch out for you?

Halpin: Yeah, but that was fun. I remember that.

ME: How old were you back

Halpin: Oh, about ten--about eight or ten.

ME: So it would be 1917.

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: Somewhere right in there.

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: About how far out do you picture Cedar Rapids extending in 1917?
You say that E Avenue went out real far?

Halpin: Oh, Well. There was West Highlands when I was little, but that was the end. West Highlands was on top of Third Avenue hill, that part, but then it's built up miles past then.

ME: So right there--Third Avenue west, you're talking about Third Avenue hill. You're talking about general vicinity of where Turner Mortuary west is?

Halpin: Yes. Maybe about three blocks past that.

ME: And that was about the end of town.

Halpin: Yeah. That was about the end of the city limits. I suppose, but see it's built up lots--blocks and blocks past that.

ME: How about on the east side of town? Of course you probably didn't know very much about that.

Halpin: No, I don't know. I remember there was Cedar Park out on the Marion Highway. There were farms. There was a mule barn out on First Avenue on the way to Marion. I mean that would be like in the country, but you know there's no country now between

ME: Between Marion and Cedar Rapids. I even remember country between Marion and Cedar Rapids. What about shopping? Was the only shopping right in downtown Cedar Rapids?

Halpin: Oh, yes. Well, 16th Avenue west would have stores.

ME: In Czech Village--what is now Czech Village.

Halpin: Yes. That's right, but we never went down there to shop.

ME: Why?

Halpin: Well, I suppose if we didn't have a car, it was hard to get to, and I don't think they had any dress shops. They had more meat markets and grocery stores and things like that.

ME: Do you remember some of the nicer shops or stores downtown that you enjoyed going to? Or different

Halpin: Well, Armstrongs has always been in town; I mean as far as I am concerned, and Martins is always a nice store. There was a

nice dress shop; Mr. Frankle owned it.

ME: And where was this?

Halpin: That was on, I think it was in two places--different times, but one time it was on Second Street between where Armstrongs is, between Second and Third Avenue. And Denekes? that was on the corner of Second Avenue and Second Street.

ME: Which corner? Where the IE Building is now or--

Halpin: No, that's First Street.

ME: Well, okay. I'm sorry. The old IE Building.

Halpin: Oh, yes. It would be right across Second Avenue--Denekes was.

ME: What about soda parlors? You know the old ice cream parlors. Do you remember were there any of them in town?

Halpin: Yes. There was a Den and there was a Lewis Tea Room they called it, but it was all ice cream and sandwiches and things like that.

ME: Where was that?

Halpin: And that one time--that was where the Armstrong Building is--facing Third Avenue, but it wasn't as big as the Armstrong. You know it was just a store front, and then the Butterfly Inn, you probably can remember that can't you?

ME: Well, it's still downtown. There still is a Butterfly Cafe.

Halpin: Oh, yeah. That's right.

ME: Were the streets brick or dirt?

Halpin: Oh, downtown they were brick.

ME: How far out did they extend being brick--where they might change.

Halpin: Well, I never lived on a street that wasn't paved.

ME: So most of the streets in the city area were paved.

Halpin: In the central area. Oh, yes.

ME: With brick? They were all brick?

Halpin: I think so in those days.

ME: Looking at these pictures

Halpin: Those are from old Cedar Rapids, huh.

ME: The Kimble Building.

Halpin: Yes, that was up on Third Street, no that was on First Street and

ME: Now that's someone else's recollection. Do you remember that building?

Halpin: I remember, yes, and I think it was between Second Avenue and Third Avenue where part of the Armstrong Building is now. I'm not sure.

ME: So this is in the general area then?

Halpin: Yeah.

ME: Did you ever go on any train trips anywhere?

Halpin: Oh, yes. My father worked for the railroad, and he could get passes and when we were growing up I think we went to Colorado. He had a sister, and her husband and family lived on a ranch in Colorado, and we went to Colorado every other year on the train.

ME: Would you have the sleepers and all that?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: There'd been stories in the paper. Sud Dows has written stories for the paper about how their private rail car and all that, but you went on the sleepers with the curtains like you see in all the movies. Do you think that was just as much fun if not more fun?

Halpin: Oh yes.

ME: How long would it take you to get out to Denver or wherever?

Halpin: About three days--not to Denver cause we had to go past Denver. They lived in Gunnison, Colorado.

ME: Then you remember the Union Station?

Halpin: Oh, sure I do.

ME: Could you describe it? Was it an elaborate or--

Halpin: No. It was very ordinary, always as far as I can remember, and I'm sure that's the only place we went to catch a train.

ME: Well, I remember going out to Marion.

Halpin: Oh, yes. That's when the streamliners came in.

ME: The present library, soon to be the old library, was built

Halpin: It has always been there as long as I can remember.

ME: Do you remember the murder in the library--the shoot out in the library?

Halpin: Is that when they had the big murder trial in Cedar Rapids?

ME: No, that's when the guy got on the trolley car in Kenwood and showed a gun at some kids, and they followed him down to the--

Halpin: No. I don't remember that.

ME: Let me think about some other things. The Douglas Starchworks.

Halpin: Oh, yes. I was about twelve years old and that evening--it was early evening

ME: Now we're talking about the Douglas Starchworks explosion, right?

Halpin: Yes. And that evening a cousin of mine, who was grown up, was staying with my brother and me because Mother was taking that inter-urban to Marion to a graduation and this awful noise, (and we could see smoke and everything) and we couldn't find my brother, my cousin who was staying with us--babysitting with us really and so we started. Someone said they saw him jump on his little bicycle and go with some bigger boys. So we started out to try to find him, and we found him coming back. And then when we got home,

Mother was home. She'd gotten to Marion and when she had heard this had happened, she got right back on the same inter-urban and came back home. And I can remember we started out walking, and we stood on the 16th Avenue bridge and watched that fire.

ME: Now what is standing where the Douglas Starchworks used to stand?

Halpin: Well, Penick & Ford.

ME: So you stood on the 16th Avenue bridge and watched it burn?

Halpin: Yes.

ME: What do you recollect about it?

Halpin: Because we kept wondering about there were several, oh a lot of people lost their lives we kept thinking of men that we knew--my mother did. That work there and wonder if they had been on a shift. You know that was there, and it was

ME: Did you know any of the people that were killed?

Halpin: Yes, I suppose we did, but I can't recall right now who they were.

ME: How long did you stay watching it?

Halpin: Oh, probably three-quarter of an hour or so.

ME: Thank you, Frances, for your time on this interview.

Halpin: You're very welcome.

END OF SIDE TWO



