

Mildred Alspaugh

2/25/92

Page 1

IA: 1992, we are at the home of Mildred Alspaugh. This is Shirley Bradley and Lisa Fine and we are going to be talking to Mrs. Alspaugh about her husband's years at the Reo. And perhaps some of her relatives worked there. Okay. Um, I guess the best way to start might be to just go through again what you were telling us with these names, you know, who the people were in your family that worked at Reo and when they worked there. Is that okay, Shirley?

IB: That's fine with me.

IA: Okay.

Alspaugh: Well my father, do you want the whole name?

IA: Yeah, that will be great.

Alspaugh: My father, Richard Bays ah, moved to Lansing in 1911.

IA: Great, where did he move from?

Alspaugh: Ah, Gratiot County is all I can tell you.

IA: Okay. Was he a farmer?

Alspaugh: Yes.

IA: He was a farmer up there?

Alspaugh: Ah huh. And ah he ah he worked there until about 1970.

IA: Oh my. So he was there close to 60 years?

Alspaugh: It was a long time.

IA: Yeah, oh my goodness.

Alspaugh: And ah, then ah, my uncle, I better put my glasses on.

IA: Okay. Ah he was there through a lot of things that happened at the Reo.

Alspaugh: My uncle, Bird Phillips, I mean just put Bird Phillips,

IA: Okay, Bird Phillips and that was your father's brother-in-law, right?

Alspaugh: Yes.

IA: Okay.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 2

Alspaugh: I ah, I really can't say how long he worked there, but I wouldn't imagine possibly more than five years ... make it, you know.

IA: In the '20's?

IB: Do you think he worked there in the '20's?

Alspaugh: No, it my dad ah, he worked with my dad

IA: At the beginning? Oh okay.

IB: Oh.

Alspaugh: And then my brother, I don't just remember when he started working there. But ah, he worked there for 28 years, but he drove truck overland, you know, he drove the trucks

IA: The Reo trucks

Alspaugh: Yeah, the Reo trucks here and there and whatever.

IA: Oh they were delivering cars, maybe?

Alspaugh: Ah that is what he was doing. And ah.

IA: And what was your brother's name?

Alspaugh: Harland.

IA: Harland.

Alspaugh: Bayes.

IA: Bayes. Okay. Okay. And then, then your husband.

Alspaugh: Oh my husband let me see, ah, I started going with him in '26. That's an awful way of doing it.

IA: No it isn't.

IB: No.

Alspaugh: I think he started there in '23.

IA: Ah huh.

IB: Oh my goodness.

IA: So he'd been working there a little while when you met him.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 3

Alspaugh: Yes.

IA: Do you remember what he did when he started working there?

Alspaugh: Well he was a trucker. I mean he ah, trucked things through the, through the

IA: Through the plant, oh okay.

IB: Was it like they needed parts or

IA: Like parts or stock or things like that.

Alspaugh: Ah huh. And ah, you know, when he died they took up a collection and the fellow that brought it over to me said that was the biggest collection that they ever had taken up. And ah, then two years afterwards one of the men told me, he says you know, they still talk about how you could depend on Melvin. And that made me feel good.

IA: Yes, indeed.

Alspaugh: ... Melvin

IA: C, okay. And you think he started in 1923. Okay. Um, what did your dad do in Reo?

Alspaugh: Well he was just ah, oh I guess you would call a day worker, because I used to ah, keep track, or he would always bring his ah, slips home, you know, way back then they got these little slips and I'd always add them up for him. I thought I was really smart.

IA: Like pay slips or something?

Alspaugh: Yeah.

IB: For the piece work?

IA: Was it for the piece work?

Alspaugh: Yeah, piece work.

IA: And it would say on there how much he had done and how long he worked and then you'd add it up

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IA: to see how much he would make.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 4

IA: Isn't that interesting.

Alspaugh: And I started doing that when I was about 11 years old. And ah,

IA: You probably got pretty good with numbers from doing that, huh?

Alspaugh: I think maybe that's where I got my writing. I love to write. I tell myself and tell everybody that I'm a frustrated author because I'm always forever writing letters. And say well I don't know how you write so many letters. Well, shoot I like to keep in touch with people and so I just ramble.

IA: I think you should be writing.

Alspaugh: You want

IA: Yes, thank you. We just wanted you to talk about a little bit. Um, did your dad come um, he came to Lansing or Gratiot County to work at the Reo or

Alspaugh: He moved to Lansing from up in Gratiot County.

IA: To work at Reo?

Alspaugh: ... he didn't know what he was going to do.....

IA: He just came for a job. Yeah. He didn't want to stay on the farm anymore?

Alspaugh: That's right. Well, I think possibly my mother wanted us a better education, so she thought that moving down, you know,

IA: Oh he was already married then when you came down.

Alspaugh: Oh yes. Oh yes.

IA: I see, were you born up there in Gratiot County?

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IA: You were, oh okay, so do you remember coming down here to Lansing?

Alspaugh: Good heavens no.

IA: You don't, you were too little.

Alspaugh: I was, I was about four.

IB: You were four.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 5

IA: So she wanted you to get a better education in better schools.

Alspaugh: They thought it would be better down here, so they came down here.

IA: And besides your brother, Harlan, how many other brothers and sisters?

Alspaugh: Well I had an older brother and he died and then I had a younger sister and she died and then in between there I had my sister, Irene.

IA: So there was five altogether.

Alspaugh: Yeah. My brother and I are the only one that's left.

IA: Harlan?

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IA: Um, did your dad, um, think that working at the Reo was a good thing to do?

Alspaugh: Yes.

IA: He thought it was a good job?

Alspaugh: Yes. Ah huh.

IA: And he was able to take care of all you?

Alspaugh: That's right. Well I was trying to think how much he started

IA: Made?

Alspaugh: made when he first ah, came. I don't think it was more than \$4 or \$5 a day working all day.

IB: And they worked long hours.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: Probably Saturdays too sometimes.

Alspaugh: And, of course, there was overtime. I can remember him working overtime, but ah, I know that I think back now, the price of things like it is now and it is just

IA: It is different.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 6

Alspaugh: how my mother ever managed. Of course, my mother did a lot of sewing. She made all of our clothes. I mean the girls' clothes and like that and the boys' shirts, but ah, my brothers' shirts and like that, but ah

IA: And she had, housework was much harder in those days too,

Alspaugh: Yeah.

IA: so she had a lot to keep her busy doing that.

Alspaugh: That's right, because she had to use a board to clean her clothes on.

IB: Oh that's right. Yeah.

IA: And did you live down there by R. E. Olds when you were growing up?

Alspaugh: Well, ah, when we first moved to Lansing, we lived in Chestnut Street and then ah, we bought a house down on Main Street and that was just four blocks from where R. E. Olds

IA: Lived. That must have been a nice neighborhood.

IB: There were some nice houses along through there.

IA: Yeah.

Alspaugh: It was them, I don't know, I haven't been down there for so long, I'd probably get lost.

IA: There is only one or two left, because ah, the 496 expressway was built right through there and they tore down R. E. Olds home and they tore down the Scott mansion and they tore down ah, Warren G. Holmes place, all of those beautiful homes that went on Main Street.

Alspaugh: Did they?

IA: There is only

Alspaugh: Scott's home and everything all tore down?

IA: Um, no, I'm sorry, it was the Barnes, the big castle, the Barnes castle. But the Scott house is there and ah, I think the Cooley house.

IB: The Turner-Dodge.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 7

IA: No that's over,

IB: That's the other side,

IA: that's right down this way.

IB: Yeah, okay.

IA: Ah, those are left and the one they turned into a museum, the big Scott house is called the ah, Women's Hall of Fame.

IB: That's what I was thinking of.

IA: Yeah. And the only ... with two houses left on that whole street, it is all expressway now. It's a shame.

Alspaugh: I haven't been down there in so long, I lost track of everything, but

IA: I used to go by R. E. Olds home when I was a kid and I thought it was a beautiful place. So you must have seen it too.

Alspaugh: That's right. And then there was an old gentleman, now this is off the record here, don't

IA: You don't want this on the tape?

Alspaugh: No.

IA: Okay. (turn tape off) You should write those down yourself sometime. So um, your dad did pretty well to get a house, to buy a house there in those neighborhoods at that time.

Alspaugh: That's right. And it wasn't very expensive.

IA: And he had pretty steady work too? Right?

Alspaugh: Yes, he did. And then too when they had their summer layoff, you know, like that,

IA: Right.

Alspaugh: he knew he'd always mow lawns.

IA: Oh he'd mow lawns.

Alspaugh: When he wasn't working he mowed lawns.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 8

IA: Did he go hunting, did he do some hunting too, because they, when I read a lot about the Reo workers, they always in the fall, they'd go back up the country sometime and do hunting. Did he do anything like that?

Alspaugh: Do what?

IA: Hunting?

Alspaugh: Oh heavens no.

IA: No, he wasn't interested in that.

Alspaugh: No he wasn't.

IA: Because a lot of them talked about that in the magazine. Did you ever see the magazine, the Reo Spirit?

Alspaugh: Oh yes. In fact, if I had had more time, I might have been able to locate one. But I ah, didn't have time to hunt.

IA: That's okay. That's alright. That's okay.

Alspaugh: I tell you. I've lived here nearly 50 years oh no, yeah nearly 50 years, no longer than that. Because my youngest daughter is ah, are older than that. My twin daughters are older than that. And they were just babies when we moved here. And ah, ah, I've got so much stuff stacked around that I thought the other day, if these people that move a lot, they are better off than I am. Because well I'll take care of this, you know, I guess

IA: Well if you ever decide to and you find something that you think we might be interested, just give us a call.

Alspaugh: You'll have to leave me your

IA: Oh we will.

Alspaugh: But I don't ah, I don't know where it is, because as I say, I've got stuff stuck here, stuck there.

IA: And um, did your dad or your family ever go to the um, the clubhouse for things?

Alspaugh: Oh my we went every, every week to the clubhouse show.

IA: Yeah, even when you were a kid?

Alspaugh: Oh yeah.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 9

IA: Yeah, to the movie pictures?

Alspaugh: Ah huh. Yeah.

IA: Anything else that you did there? There was things to do.

Alspaugh: Oh I've been there to a couple of some kind of, I don't know what you'd call it, not a party, but sort of a gathering. I can't remember who it was for or why. Because ah, but um, no, we always went to the um,

IA: The pictures.

Alspaugh: and ah, I was trying to think of what the fellow's name was that was there so much that was kind of head of it.

IA: Sinclair. Arthur Sinclair.

Alspaugh: Huh, yeah, that's the guy.

IA: Right.

Alspaugh: That's the guy.

IA: Good for you for remembering. I couldn't remember it.

IB: Arthur Sinclair.

IA: Did you, you knew who he was?

Alspaugh: Oh yes. He was a very nice fellow. We used to always go down there and then we used to go to the band concerts, always.

IA: The Reo Band.

Alspaugh: Yeah, the Reo Band.

IB: Oh you are the first person we've talked to that remembers hearing the band play.

Alspaugh: Oh yes. ... hear the band play.

IA: Like maybe often through the summer they'd have them or all around through the year.

Alspaugh: Yeah, well just through the summer.

IA: In the summer.

Alspaugh: They ah,

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 10

IB: Outdoors? Outdoor concerns?

Alspaugh: Over at Moores Park, I believe.

IB: Oh, great.

IA: Oh really, oh how wonderful.

IB: Take your picnic and go hear the music.

Alspaugh: That's right.

IA: Oh that's nice, that sounds like fun.

IB: Did you listen to Reo on the radio, the radio station, did you guys have a radio?

Alspaugh: No.

IB: You didn't have a radio.

Alspaugh: Didn't have anything

IA: Oh, that would have made it difficult. Did your father um, belong to, they had a baseball team I think.

Alspaugh: My dad wouldn't be in anything like that.

IA: Oh he was too busy working, wasn't he?

Alspaugh: He was just a plain old farmer. Now that's all he was.

IA: And a good father, it sounds like.

IB: Because they had lots of sports teams and

Alspaugh: That's right, but no he never went in for anything like that.

IA: Ah huh, but the ah, things that you went to, the movies and the band concerts those were all free because your dad worked at Reo?

Alspaugh: Well they was all free anyway.

IA: Oh, oh, anybody could come.

Alspaugh: I mean the band concerts because they was out there

IA: Outside.

Alspaugh: outside, how could you

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 11

IA: Right, that's true. I never thought of that.

Alspaugh: But the stuff inside the building, why that was different. We used to always look forward to going, it seems to me it was on a Wednesday night, if I remember.

IB: The pictures?

Alspaugh: Yeah.

IA: And the band concerts maybe were on a Sunday?

Alspaugh: Well most generally it was on a Sunday, sometimes it would be on a Saturday afternoon.

IA: When people weren't working as much and could come.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IA: What a nice service to the community.

IB: To the community to be able to just go out there and enjoy music.

Alspaugh: That's right. We used to always go down there and because I know, we used to have to cross the bridge and I always knew I was going to fall in that water. I was always glad when I got across the bridge.

IB: You know why I understand that, I used to be that way downtown in Lansing, I was afraid to cross the Grand River and I would hang on to my mother so tight, I just knew, just like you, I just knew I was going to fall in. Um, did your dad work there through the '30's, the 1930's?

Alspaugh: Ah, I can't remember just how long ... it seems to me he was still working in the '30's.

IB: And through the '30's.

Alspaugh: I'm just kind of going through my mind when I graduated.

IA: Sure.

Alspaugh: And he was working in there.

IB: Yeah, because I was just wondering about because from my own reading, I found out that the union came in in 1937 and I was just wondering if he joined the union when it came to the Reo? Did he? Was he involved in that?

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 12

Alspaugh: No, he never was in the union.

IB: He was never in the union. Okay.

Alspaugh: No.

IB: Most of the time he was there there wasn't any union anyway.

Alspaugh: Um, he was there past the time when ah, Blue Cross and like that got into the Reo.

IB: Oh is that right?

Alspaugh: Yeah, but I can't remember when that was.

IA: I wonder if he, he must have been there when they had the strike then.

Alspaugh: Yes he was, but I can't tell you much about that.

IA: 1936, about that was. '36, '37.

Alspaugh: He used to mow lawns and everything like that you know, to and not only that, prices was a heck of a lot smaller than they are now. Paid 13 cents for a dozen eggs like that. People don't even believe it anymore.

IA: Ah, I was going to ask about the condition Did your father thing that working in the Reo, did he think there were good working conditions there, you know, for the workers safety?

Alspaugh: Oh he he enjoyed it. In fact, he enjoyed it so much that he used to help my Uncle Bird, he'd get his done and he was kind of a fast little fellow, and short, you know, and he is kind of a fast little fellow. And he'd get his work all done and then he'd go help his brother-in-law so he wouldn't get fired.

IA: Oh is that right?

IB: Oh he could help him on the line, oh I see.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IA: In those days you didn't have a union to protect your job, so if your uncle didn't get as much of his work done they might fire him, is that right?

Alspaugh: Ah huh, and my dad used to finish his work and go and help him out a little bit.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 13

IA: And they didn't mind him doing that, the boss.

Alspaugh: I don't even know if they knew it.

IB: Oh.

IA: I see.

Alspaugh: I don't know if they knew it.

IB: Yeah.

IA: You could get fired, I suppose, easily in those days without a union to protect you. If you were sick, you probably had to work anyway for fear of losing your job, I suppose.

Alspaugh: Well no, if you were really sick, they accepted that.

IA: They did.

Alspaugh: But um, just saying your a sick and then they find you at some other party or something, well that don't go over.

IA: Um, did you, your family feel like the Reo would take care of your family? You know like if something were to happen or um,

Alspaugh: Well I don't know, but now as I was telling her, ah, when ah, my husband was killed over there by the Reo, why ah, they took up a collection

IB: Oh a collection, that's right.

Alspaugh: they took up a collection and they said that was the largest collection they had ever taken up.

IB: Right. Now when did that happen?

IA: What year was that?

Alspaugh: Ah '63.

IA: 1963, and what did your husband do at the Reo? What was his job?

Alspaugh: He was a

IA: He drove the trucks.

Alspaugh: He drove trucks all over the place.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 14

IA: Stock trucks maybe. Right. He did that the whole time he was there from 1923 to 1963?

Alspaugh: I don't know what he did in '23, because I didn't know him then, so

IB: Oh that's right. That's right.

Alspaugh: But in '26

IB: Until then? Wow, so he worked there a long time too.

IA: Everybody must have depended on him being there so long. Everybody must have known him.

Alspaugh: Well as I was saying, I don't, whether I told you, I meant to tell you that two years after his death, ah, some fellow said they were still remarking how you could always depend on my husband. Because if he said he was going to do something, you might as well make up your mind he is going to do it, that's all. He was an awful stickler for that.

IB: So he felt very good about the company just like your dad did?

Alspaugh: Oh yes.

IB: That the Reo was a good place to work and he was able to work pretty consistently, steady for all those years, 40 years that he was there.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: Did he do any, did he um, participate in any of the kinds of things we asked if your dad participate in like sports or clubs or any of that stuff.

Alspaugh: No. Now if you give him a book that would be something else, but

IB: He was much more of a studious person. Yeah, not athletic.

Alspaugh: Yeah.

IB: Um, and he worked all through the war?

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: He worked through World War II when they were doing all the defense work and so forth?

Alspaugh: Ah huh. Yeah.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 15

IB: And um, he was able to also, like your dad, take care of a family well

Alspaugh: Oh he did a good job.

IB: on what he was able to make at Reo.

Alspaugh: Ah huh yeah. I say now that I think we raised our seven kids from what it takes to raise two now.

IB: Yeah. Now it seems like both mother and dad have to go to work. At least I know we do.

IA: I know I do. Through your husband working at Reo, you had hospitalization and that kind of thing for your family.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: Was your husband, was he member of the union, because the union was in

Alspaugh: No.

IB: He didn't belong to the union.

Alspaugh: No, he didn't believe in that.

IB: He didn't believe in unions.

IA: Oh, so you had your right to refuse to join the union, but you could still keep your job.

Alspaugh: Well to tell you the truth now, I don't believe he ever joined, I never heard him say anything about joining. Maybe he did for all I know. But, because, you know, he was a kind of a quiet person and if he didn't think it was anything of my business, why he never said anything. (laughter)

IA: I guess I can kind of understand that, because he came from the time when the men go to work and that was their thing in life and they just went to work and did their work and came home and ah,

IB: But with the Reo there was lots of things for families to do together, right? I mean you still went to the clubhouse and

Alspaugh: We went to the clubhouse.

IA: Took your children?

Alspaugh: Huh?

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 16

IA: You took your children?

Alspaugh: Oh yes. Well no I didn't have any children then.

IA: Oh I see. What about later, when your children came along, did you and your husband take your children to anything at the Reo, any, were there things there

Alspaugh: I don't think there was very much there.

IB: There wasn't much going on yet, yeah.

Alspaugh: Because, it just broke my heart when they tore it down or something.

IA: They tore it down.

IB: Yeah. They did.

Alspaugh: Because I thought that was a really a shame because ah, we had enjoyed it so much going there to the shows and things like that but ah

IA: It was a shame, ah the people in Lansing were able to go and rent the place for receptions and all kinds, so all kinds of things happened there.

Alspaugh: That's right, ah huh.

IA: And it really was a community center of its day.

Alspaugh: Yes, and everybody the Reo clubhouse, you know, that was something.

IA: Did I see on there that her son worked there too or am I

IB: No brother.

IA: That was her brother, Harlan.

IB: Yeah. Um, now you said when um, Melvin died in the accident, there was a collection in the company, in the plant. That was mostly the workers doing that.

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: Was there anything the company um, did to help you or the family after the accident?

Alspaugh: No, not that I know of. Just a collection is all.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 17

IB: Ah huh.

Alspaugh: It was \$400 and I thought that was really something.

IB: An huh, in 1963. It is a lot more than it is right now.

IA: But there were no ah, were there, was there a pension or something that so you were able to go on and take care of your family?

Alspaugh: Well I just happened to be close enough to social security that I only had to, I had a licensed home for a couple of years and then I got social security.

IA: Oh your children were grown and gone by that time.

Alspaugh: Yeah, they were all graduated.

IA: And you were by yourself.

Alspaugh: Yeah, they had all graduated. So, you know, we got along just fine. Still getting along.

IB: Good.

Alspaugh: Of course, too, I worked on the election for 40 years and that money helped out too.

IB: Oh you set in at the polls in the election?

Alspaugh: Ah huh.

IB: Oh.

Alspaugh: I worked there for nearly 40 years. Just lacking, well I would say 39 and 1/2 years. You know, that I worked there.

IA: You've been busy.

Alspaugh: I enjoyed it. I like people. (laughter) And I made a lot of friends that way.

IA: I bet you did, yeah.

Alspaugh: But no, my husband was always, my dad never complained about the Reo. And when I was 11 years old, ah, I started adding up his, you know, they get these little slips and so every week or ... whatever it does, I can't remember, ah, why I'd add up to see how much money he was going to make. My I was proud of that, because I was able to add up his pay money.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 18

IA: And then did he have to take those slips and turn them back in to get his check or whatever.

Alspaugh: I don't know what he ever done with them.

IA: I was just curious.

Alspaugh: As long as he got the money, I didn't care or else I got a new dress or something and I didn't care.

IA: That was a little more. And you said your mom mostly, she had plenty to keep her busy at home. She did the sewing

Alspaugh: My mother made most of our clothes.

IB: She made your clothes.

Alspaugh: Her mother was a dressmaker and evidently my mother inherited some of it because ah she ah, made ah, clothes for us and ah, made clothes for other people.

IB: Oh, so that probably helped out at home a lot too.

IA: Do you sew also?

Alspaugh: Huh?

IA: Do you also sew?

Alspaugh: What?

IA: Do you sew too?

Alspaugh: Not any more, I used to.

IA: But you used to just like your mother did.

Alspaugh: Ah huh. I made all my children's, some of my children's shirts and stuff like that, but I never went outside the house.

IA: Ah huh, you worked here in the house.

Alspaugh: Well, what I meant I didn't sew for anybody else.

IB: Oh, I see.

IA: But that helped your budget though, you were able to make the shirts and maybe blouses and dresses for the children.

Alspaugh: Ah huh. And ah, so I don't know,

Mildred Alspaugh

2/25/92

Page 19

IB: When you, ah, you lived with your family, your parents on Main Street, and then um, after you married your husband, which was, you said you started dating him in '26, did you marry him pretty soon after that?

Alspaugh: Twenty-nine.

IB: Twenty-nine, okay. The year of the crash. Right.

IA: Oh that's right.

IB: Um, did you move, you didn't move in here right away?

Alspaugh: What?

IB: You didn't move in here.

Alspaugh: No.

IB: Where did you live?

Alspaugh: We ah, oh I can't tell you where all we lived.

IB: Oh you moved around a lot of different places?

Alspaugh: Well we lived in two different, we lived for a while on Holmes Street, but before that we ah, lived someplace else and I can't even tell you where it was,

IA: But you rented?

Alspaugh: but was on, it was on ah, oh some street that comes off from Washington Avenue, right now I can't I tell everybody if I went up town I'd get lost. But ah, then ah, we moved over on Hill Street, we lived there 13 years.

IB: Ah huh, you rented a house or did you buy the house?

Alspaugh: We rented it.

IB: You rented it, okay.

Alspaugh: Then we bought

IB: Then you bought this house.

Alspaugh: Yeah. Believe it or not we had this house paid for in seven years.

IB: Wow.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 20

Alspaugh: It was really a bargain.

IB: Oh my.

Alspaugh: We was kind of lucky because ah, ah, some man, I've forgotten what his name was now, said well he says I've got a, he was in kind of real estate and he says we'll I've got a house that I own. He says I'll sell it to you cheap and so he ah, brought us over here because he couldn't, for some reason, he couldn't get rid of the people that was in the house. And so he thought if he sold it, why they'd have to leave.

IB: They'd have to leave. (laughter)

Alspaugh: And ah, so ah, we came in and looked it over and decided, I tell you it was twenty-nine fifty that we had to pay for this house. And ah, so we decided to buy it, \$15 a month payment, can you imagine that.

IB: Oh my my.

Alspaugh: And we had this house paid for in seven years. Because my husband had bought war bonds, you know, like that, so he turned them in and so, but ah, when we ah, came in and looked at it, it looked pretty decent, but after the people moved out, he sold it cheap because he had been trying for a long time to get rid of these people. For some reason, he couldn't 'get rid of them. I don't know why. And ah, we come back over here, they had ripped all the wallpaper off and

IA: They were angry.

IB: So you had some fixing up to do.

Alspaugh: And got it all papered up and like that, so we had this house all paid for in seven years.

IA: That's amazing. Hum.

Alspaugh: I just, sometimes I think oh golly we were lucky, you know, to be able to do that.

IA: Well you worked hard at it too. We were only able to ever ... we rented all the time that I grew up. I think that's wonderful that your husband made enough at the Reo that you could buy your own home.

IB: And you raised children here, mostly?

Mildred Alspaugh

2/25/92

Page 21

Alspaugh: Yeah. Well, ah, Diane I think was about 14 when we moved here. She is in her 60's now. And we are all getting there. Oh I'm going to soon be 85. I look in a mirror and I says how come.
(laughter)

IB: I do the same thing. I can't understand what's happening. It is all going by too fast.

Alspaugh: Well when you stop and think I started out at Three Palms had seven months, wasn't they still think I'm hanging around, that's

IB: That's a miracle in itself.

Alspaugh: Naturally.

IB: To have survived being a premature then without the medical knowledge and

IA: At least your mother must have scared, your mother must have been scared to death.

IB: Well I was scared to death.

Alspaugh: My mother, I don't know, she just I took, she kept me on a feather pillow by the stove to keep me warm and like that, but

IA: I think you must have been a healthy little girl for three pounds though.

IB: That's right.

IA: You survived.

Alspaugh: Ah, but you know, my I was going to say my marriage license, but I met my birth certificate. All it says on there and my father's name, my mother's name and baby girl.

IA: Oh, maybe they didn't expect you to live at the time.

Alspaugh: I don't think they did. I don't think they did.

IA: Perhaps that's why you didn't get a middle name.

Alspaugh: And ah, so I was a baby girl. I thought to myself what good would that ever be if

IA: A passport or something.

Alspaugh: I should have went down to the and had it straightened out,

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 22

IA: Changed.

Alspaugh: but I didn't.

IA: It still says baby girl?

Alspaugh: Yeah.

IA: I think that's wonderful.

Alspaugh: I've got a, I was going to say a doll. I've got a dress upstairs yet that I wore when I was three months old and I swear it is no bigger than you know, like that.

IA: Oh like a doll's dress.

Alspaugh: A doll's dress. And a great big long skirt on the darn thing.

IA: Oh sure.

Alspaugh: I've kept it, it's up there on one of my trunks, I don't know or suitcases or some place.

IA: It would be a wonderful thing for your children to have some day, mama's dress.

Alspaugh: But ah,

IB: Did you have some boys?

Alspaugh: Oh yeah. Yeah. I got three boys and four girls.

IB: Three boys and four girls. Did any of them work in the Reo?

Alspaugh: No, my brother is the only one that

IB: Your brother was the only one.

Alspaugh: No, my oldest boy, Melvin Eugene worked at the Olds.

IB: Oh he went to Olds.

Alspaugh: And he's retired now. That was hard to take, you know.
(laughter) He is old enough to retire.

IB: He must have taken an early retirement though.

Alspaugh: No.

IB: No.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 23

Alspaugh: He's a let's see, Diane is, he was 60 right around in there
someplace. And ah, then no I have

IB: What did he do at the Olds? What was his job there, do you know?

Alspaugh: No I don't know.

IB: You don't know.

Alspaugh: I have no idea. And then I've got a younger son that works there
too.

IB: Olds?

Alspaugh: At the Olds, yeah. Ah, he is a, oh shoot what is it, a mechanic.

IB: He is a mechanic.

Alspaugh: Yeah. So, he is a little bitty short fellow. He is not much
taller than I am.

IB: He must take after you.

IA: If the Reo had stayed in business, maybe your sons would have gone
there.

Alspaugh:

IA: Yeah, because their dad had worked there.

IB: You know, a lot of people we talked to about the Reo said that it
was like a big family.

Alspaugh: It was, it really was.

IB: That's always the word they use, you know, it was like a big
family.

Alspaugh: Well now just to show you. Ah, this isn't all being taken down is
it?

IB: It is on the tape, but if you want us to turn it off, we can turn
it off.

Alspaugh: Oh turn it off, I don't care, but ah, when my ah husband died, a
black fellow came down and asked to be pallbearer. And ah, I know
my husband used to speak about him, every once and a while, real
real nicely you know, A number 1, but I can't think of his
name now.

Mildred Alspaugh
2/25/92
Page 24

IB: Just a worker that he knew down there that worked with him.

Alspaugh: Yeah, worked down there and ah, he came and asked if he couldn't be a pallbearer. And I thought that was so nice of him.

IA: And so he was then?

Alspaugh: one of the pallbearers.

IB: So working together made them feel very like they were close.

Alspaugh: Well I'll tell you. Ah, my husband was very friendly with everybody. I mean, he couldn't see too much bad in anything. And ah, he had a lot of friends and as I told you, ah, two years after he died, they were still talking on they could always depend on him.

IA: You know, I wonder if that's maybe how I got your name, someone remembered working with him. Somebody I talked to said that they remembered and I bet that's why. Because they still think of him too and he is still part of their family. And so they thought that we should maybe talk to you for a few minutes. Your husband's memory just lives right on.

Alspaugh: Yeah. Well, he is living right on here too. (laughter) I'll tell you if anybody ever seen my house, they'd probably think I was batty, because sometimes I look at his picture over there and I say good night.

IA: Oh.

IB: Well you know, I have a friend who lost her husband two years ago and she still talks to him, not all the time, but if she buys a new dress. Now he used to kind of not like her to buy lots of clothes and she'll come home with a new dress and she'll say, well Ed, I've done it again, do you like it, you know. So just the same thing.

Alspaugh: Well I don't do it, you know, real often, but every once and a while because ah,

IB: You were with him for a long time, you know.

IA: You shared a lot.

Alspaugh: And to me he is still here. But ah, I now this isn't for records, this is just

IB: Okay. (Tape off).