

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 1

IA: I bet that was what it was.

IB: At the RE Olds Museum, Lisa Fine, Shirley Bradley. We're going to be interviewing Norma Grimwood on REO Memories.

IA: Wood, at the Museum. Testing one, two, three. Norma Grimwood, March 26th, 1992. Just need some information about where you live and...

Grimwood: Where I live now?

IA: Yup.

Grimwood: 616.

IA: 616...

Grimwood: Fenton, F E N T O N.

IA: Okay.

Grimwood: Lansing.

IA: Okay, and just some information about you even though I know you're probably gonna be talking about your father's family, right, mostly, but where you were born.

Grimwood: Lansing.

IA: Lansing. You went to school here?

Grimwood: Yes.

IA: Okay.

Grimwood: Lived here all my life.

IA: Okay, that's easy.

Grimwood: Born in the house, born in the house my parents moved into when they got married.

IA: Oh, really?

Grimwood: My brother, too.

IA: And where was that?

Grimwood: 214 Moores River Drive.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 2

IA: Oh.

Grimwood: The house is still there. My grandson lives in it.

IA: And they owned it, your parents owned the house? And they moved in there when they got married?

Grimwood: When they got married.

IA: And what year's that?

Grimwood: 1921.

IA: And how many other children did they have besides you or were you it?

Grimwood: Oh, no, I have a brother but that's all.

IA: Okay. That's all I need for my file. Shirley.

IB:got to get my junk here. I'll let you lead off a little.....

IA: Oh, okay. Well, I just, I guess since I don't know and Shirley probably knows more than I do about your background since she knows you from here, you said your father worked at the REO since 1918, is that right?

Grimwood: Right.

IA: And what was his name?

Grimwood: Gustav, G U S T A V L E Y R E R.

IA: Okay. Was he from the United States, born in the United States?

Grimwood: Oh, yeah, born in Seebwing, up in the thumb area.

IA: Oh, okay. I'm not that familiar with I just asked 'cause Gustav was kind of a German name. (all talking at once)

Grimwood: He was down here in Lansing when he was about three or four so he's always, practically always lived in Lansing.

IA: And his, were his parents farmers up there or miners or...

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Farmers?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 3

Grimwood: Yeah, farmers.

IA: Okay.

Grimwood: Came originally from Germany.

IA: He did?

Grimwood: No.

IA: His family did.

Grimwood: No, they lived there.

IA: Yeah, that's what I wondered because of his name, Gustav is not a usual American name. They were from Germany.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: And then they moved up to...

Grimwood: The thumb area.

IA: The thumb area and farmed and then he came down here with this folks?

Grimwood: Yes, they all moved down here.

IA: Why?

Grimwood: To get jobs.

IA: Okay, so they, they weren't doing that well as farmers?

Grimwood: Well, I was about to tell you. There were nine, nine boys and at one time...

IA: He was one of nine boys?

Grimwood: Ah, huh, and at one time, they all worked at the REO.

IA: Wow.

Grimwood: All of them.

IB: Oh, my goodness. I wish they were all right here.

IA: He started in 1918. Do you know when they moved down to Lansing, the family, the nine boys and the parents?

Grimwood: Well, it would have been, it would have been...

IA: A little before that. Oh, no, much earlier...

Grimwood: Much earlier because he was only about three or four when they moved here.

IA: So around the year 1900 almost.

Grimwood: I would think so.

IA: At the turn of the century they moved down to Lansing and they moved down for his dad to get a job?

Grimwood: Yes.

IA: Did his dad work at automobile?

Grimwood: No, actually and I don't really know but I think he worked at, well, Shirley's aware, Seeger Engine Works.

IB: Yes, ah, huh.

Grimwood: And I think that's where he worked.

IB: Stationary engines.

IA: Oh, okay, 'cause the rail wasn't even around that early.

IB: Not then. Not then.

IA: Did your dad get any kind of technical training or did he just go right into the shop after school?

Grimwood: Graduated from, well, he never graduated actually. My father only went as far as the 8th grade.

IA: Eighth grade, 8th grade in Lansing.

Grimwood: And then he went, then he started to work and he worked...

IA: Right at the REO first job?

Grimwood: No. I don't know where he worked in his first job. I really don't.

IA: He was pretty young. It could have been selling papers or something.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 5

Grimwood: And he was very young when he went to the REO and as I told you, he retired from there in 1961 and they had him with 42 years of seniority but that wasn't the entire, that was not all of his seniority because as I told you the personnel files burned while he was in the Army.

IA: Where did they live? Where did he and his family live?

Grimwood: Right there on Moores River Drive.

IA: They live on...

Grimwood: His parents lived at 212.

IB: And so when he married, he bought a house just down the street?

IA: Next door.

Grimwood: My grandparents owned both houses.

IA: Oooh.

Grimwood: And when my parents got married, they bought the one that was right next to...

IA: Was he the oldest?

Grimwood: No, youngest.

IA: He was the youngest, oh, okay. He was the baby.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah. Well, that's interesting and what did your dad do when he worked at the REO?

Grimwood: I assume on the line.

IA: He was an assembler?

Grimwood: Just a regular laborer.

IA: Right.

Grimwood: When he retired he was in the experimental department.

IB: What was he doing...

Grimwood: I gave the Museum the...

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 6

IB: I haven't looked through the...

Grimwood: the amphibious things and that's what he was working on.

IB: Oh, beaver, oh. He worked on that.

IA: Or for the Navy.

Grimwood: The Navy.

IB: The Navy contract.

IA: So he really worked his way up, didn't he?

Grimwood: Oh, yes.

IA: He started right there at the bottom floor, on the shop floor and he worked his way up.

Grimwood: And he went from, and he was a superintendent at one time and he was in the union at one time and was a steward at one time, yes, he moved. That's the only place he ever worked.

IA: Did he, in the early years, whatever you remember, you know, obviously I know you were a kid, so that's alright. You don't think about the world in the same way that your parents do.

Grimwood: No, oh, I didn't either.

IA: Do you remember having participating or the family maybe participating in some of the kind of activities at the REO offered?

Grimwood: Oh, yes, and I don't, they, I don't think they actually performed but there was a, they had a real band at one time...

IA: A band, right.

Grimwood: which they had band concerts and they used to go to that. What else did they have. Of course, there was the REO clubhouse where the movies went on.

IA: Right. You would all go to that?

Grimwood: And we'd all go to that. I can't think, well of course, they were always in all the parades and all that, you know.

IA: Yeah.

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 7

Grimwood: As a matter of fact, my father was quite, was older and it was before he retired and he used to drive, they had a little REO pickup truck that was on display in the clubhouse all the time that when there was a parade, that went in the parade and my father drove it.

IB: Probably it was a Speedwagon.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: It was little, it was like a little truck. It was very, very small.

IA: Oh, like a miniature type of truck?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Oh, okay.

Grimwood: Not a real...

IA: Not the baby, it was not the baby REO.

IB: But it wasn't something in production you'd see out on the street normally?

Grimwood: At one time I suppose it would have been, yeah.

IB: Oh, okay, okay.

Grimwood: It was not a miniature. (all talking at once) It was a full size but it was a very small truck. I remember seeing that. It had stake racks on the back.

IA: Ah, like a compact.

IB: How about any of the sports stuff? REO had teams...

Grimwood: Yes. My dad played on the ball team.

IA: Oh, he did.

IB: The baseball or the, the baseball team?

Grimwood: And before my husband went in the Navy he played on the team.

IB: Your husband worked there, too?

Grimwood: Um, hum, five years.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 8

IB: When did he hire in?

Grimwood: 1941.

IA: Oh, just before the War started.

Grimwood: To '46.

IA: And what was his name, or is his name?

Grimwood: Don.

IB: Don, okay.

Grimwood: I told you this was a family affair.

IA: I guess so.

Grimwood: My brother worked there. Lee worked there, my brother worked there from '46 to '52 and my uncle worked there for about 40 some years. My mother's sister's husband plus all of my dad's family at one time.

IA: This is very hard to keep track of. You're gonna have to draw a chart.

Grimwood: Let's see. There was one, two, three, there were four of them...

IA: And your dad's nine brothers?

Grimwood: They all retired from REO.

IA: They all retired.

IB: Four retired from REO. My gosh, I think that's wonderful.

IA: Well, that, you know, begs the question, what was it about the REO that made it such a popular place.

Grimwood: Well, it was, it was, at while, it was the place to work. I mean, and it was, they were very good to their employees.

IA: Um, hum. They paid well or...

Grimwood: They paid well and they had all kinds of family activities. I mean, like I said, they had the band and the movies were twice a week and they had two different features. They had a feature on Wednesday and a feature on Friday and on Wednesday they had two performances, a 7:30 and a 9:30 and on Friday they had three. They had a matinee in which all the kids in Lansing came because

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 9

it was free and then two performances, a 7:30 and a 9:30 and they were different, different movies twice a week.

IB: Oh, my goodness.

Grimwood: I well remember that. I used to go to all of those.

IA: Did you go, did you get the Spirit, the little magazine that they put out, too?

Grimwood: Yes, and I gave the Museum some of those.

IA: Yeah, I've read a lot of those down at the archives. They're very interesting.

IB: I wish I'd had a chance to have your things here while we were talking but...

Grimwood: They're here some place.

IB: I know they are. I just haven't had time to inquire and George hasn't been here so I haven't really...

IA: Now, you said you dad was in a union, too. Did he participate in the strike in '37, do you know?

Grimwood: Was that '37 when they got locked in?

IA: Yeah.

IB: Yes.

IA: March of 1937.

Grimwood: He wasn't in the union at that time. That was before the union.

IA: That's when they tried to get the union in, right. Did he participate in that, do you know?

Grimwood: Yes, he was locked in.

IA: He was? Do you remember that?

Grimwood: I do.

IB: How long did that last?

Grimwood: I just, my recollection is over, kind of over night because they, the shop closed the doors and the men were inside and at that

time, the REO had what was called a truck plant that was down on the corner of Washington and...

IB: Baker?

Grimwood: Mt. Hope.

IB: Mt. Hope.

Grimwood: Mt. Hope and that's where he was working that day.

IB: Further south. Oh, he was down there?

Grimwood: Um, hum, and so all the doors were locked and the men couldn't get out and when it got to be, you know, like 7 o'clock, he had, he had warned my mother that there was, you know...

IA: Trouble.

Grimwood: things going on and but it got 7 o'clock and she was one of these, back in those days, the wife had the dinner on the table when the man walked in the door, you know, and so dinner was ready. He didn't come and he didn't come and he didn't come and it got 9 o'clock and she said, well, he's been locked in over there, you know, and about 10 o'clock he walked in the front door and my mother said, well, it's all over with, you know. He says, no it's not. All the fellas are still there but, he said, I was aware enough of the plant that I knew where there was a window that they left open and he says, I crawled out the window.

IB: We've heard about somebody else doing that, too.

IA: Somebody else did that, too. Maybe it was the same window. (all talking and laughing)

Grimwood: So it was about 10 o'clock when he got home and I don't remember exactly whether it was in the, they made 'em wait until the next morning to let 'em out, I don't remember. I don't recall that.

IB: But the man, the management itself locked them in?

Grimwood: As far, my recollection is the management locked 'em in to avoid the trouble.

IB: Oh, okay.

Grimwood: But that didn't stop the union because they eventually organized it anyway.

IA: Yeah, and he was, he was, he participated in the union activities?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 11

Grimwood: Um, hum, yes.

IA: He didn't see that as being a traitor to the company at all? He didn't think that that was stabbing them in the back?

Grimwood: No, because at that particular time it was going on in a lot of different plants and, of course, the union was getting pretty strong at that time so, no, he didn't.

IA: Yeah. It was right after the big sitdown strike.

Grimwood: And then, of course, when they came on supervision, when he got his promotion to supervision then he could no longer be a member.

IB: Right, right. When did that happen? When did he get promoted to supervisor, do you know?

Grimwood: Oh, dear, I don't know. That was early...

IA: Quite a while after he was there?

Grimwood: He wasn't in the union all that long.

IA: Oh, so it must have been around the time of the War, during the War?

Grimwood: He was, he was there during the War and he was active in the union during the War.

IA: Oh, he was, so it must of been later.

Grimwood: It must have been later, yeah, it must have been a little bit later than that.

IA: Okay.

IB: What about the labor holiday?

IA: Oh, yeah. Do you remember anything about that, the labor holiday? That was in June of '37, not too long after the strike, or the sitdown.

Grimwood: Really, I don't, I don't remember...

IA: You don't remember that?

IB: Everybody had the day off.

Grimwood: I should remember that because I was old enough but I was too busy doing other things apparently.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 12

IA: Yeah. Well, it only was, that really was only one day and unless you were involved in some kind of union, it probably wouldn't have affected you.

Grimwood: He probably was but I don't recall.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Your mother wasn't worried when he didn't come home at 7 o'clock and 8 o'clock? She kind of had a feeling...

Grimwood: She was kind of concerned, yeah, but of course, like I said, he had sort of prepared her that something might happen and, or she was worried but yet...

IB: But she kind of had a feeling that she knew why he wasn't there.

Grimwood: Um, hum. Um, hum.

IB: It had something to do with that. Did he feel, later after the union got strong there, did he feel it was a good thing to have the union or did he ever say much about it?

Grimwood: I think he did. I think he did because it helped the men on the line, you know, to get more money and the benefits weren't, well, the salary all the time he worked there was not what I would consider bad. They had no benefits to speak of and so the union did help in that regard to get, you know, the hospitalization and things like that. And like I say, apparently around that time it was the thing to do, well, I wasn't too involved so.

IA: He stayed through, working through the Depression, huh, through the '30s?

Grimwood: Oh, yes.

IA: He was able to stay on.

Grimwood: And he was laid off at various times during the Depression.

IA: So how did you guys make ends meet?

Grimwood: Oh, I had an uncle that did cement work and, putting sidewalks in, that type of thing and my father painted house, anything to make money.

IA: And then, when the times got better, the REO pulled him back in?

Grimwood: Call him back yeah. He went right back.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 13

IA: Yeah. We've heard that happening a lot too. So they really were loyal to their workers whenever they could give them some work, they pulled them right back in.

Grimwood: They were. And I think too, it could of been partly the name, too, because like I say, all the brothers worked there.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Oh, I see.

Grimwood: The name was...

IA: The family was known that they were good workers and...

Grimwood: I think one of my uncles, when he retired was like 70 years old.

IB: Is that right? Most all of your uncles worked in production, down on the floor, so to speak?

Grimwood: Yup, and then, of course, gradually they would work their way up to a, one of my uncles was in the purchasing department when he finally retired and traveled around different plants.

IB: Huh. Was that Ed Ranger we talked to that was in purchasing?

IA: No, he was in export. I think it was Art Farm.

IB: I think it was, too.

IA: Art Farm was the one who went into the plant. His dad worked there, too, I think, remember. I think he was the one that was in the plant during the labor holi, during the strike sitdown and he just hung out with all the men. He was like 10 years old or something. His father pulled him in to have some fun.

IB: And that wasn't a bad strike like the one in Flint.

IA: No, it wasn't.

Grimwood: Oh, no, no.

IA: He said there was never, he never thought that was gonna be any, he wasn't scared or any violence or anything. It was very low keyed.

Grimwood: Well, I think that was probably the reason my mother wasn't, you know, really all upset...

IA: Too concerned.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 14

IB: Real scared, um, hum.

IA: You said that the salary, the wages that your dad got, you know, weren't exorbitant but they were enough to keep your family going.

Grimwood: Well, back in those days, no salary was, you know, very high.

IA: Huge, that's right. But you felt that he did support your family.

Grimwood: They did very well. They did, 'cause my mother, my mother never worked.

IA: She never had to work.

Grimwood: Huh, ah.

IA: Yeah, except, take care of you all.

Grimwood: Well, of course, at one time, she also worked at the REO.

IA: Oh, she did?

IB: Oh, she did? When was that and what did she do?

Grimwood: Before she was married.

IB: Oh, really.

Grimwood: She did upholstery.

IA: Oh, she was in upholstering.

Grimwood: At that time they were manufacturing passenger cars and she did the upholstering inside.

IA: Now what was her name?

Grimwood: Gladys. At that time it was Calder, C A L D E R.

IA: C A L D E R.

Grimwood: I also have an aunt named Norma. She worked there.

IB: What did she do there?

Grimwood: For a time.

IA: Did you work there?!

IB: If it were still in existence, maybe she would.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 15

IA: She probably would. So she just worked there between when she, no, when she was old enough to and when she got married, basically, your mom, till she met your dad?

Grimwood: Yes, yes.

IB: Did she meet your dad there, at the shop?

Grimwood: Well, when she came, when she went to work at the REO he was in the Army.

IA: Oh, so it was in the '40s already.

Grimwood: Oh, no....

IA: Oh, I'm sorry, in World War I.

IB: You know, when you say the war, I think of the one I new about.

IA: I know. Sorry World War I.

Grimwood: My husband was in World War II.

IB: Sure, that's right.

IA: We've got to keep these decades straight.

Grimwood: When you get going back, it's hard.

IA: I know, it's very hard. It's very hard.

IB: So she worked there...

IA: Okay, he was in World War I, your dad?

Grimwood: My dad, oh, yeah.

IA: Was in the Army, was sent overseas?

Grimwood: Was in the Army, uh, hum. Had a fantastic time. When he was a child, of course, he went to both English school and German school so he both read and wrote German so when he was sent, he was sent to Germany....

IA: Did he have any problems with that?

Grimwood: and he could speak, no.

IB: He could interpret, though.

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 16

Grimwood: That's exactly what they had him doing and he did the buying for the, well, I want to say troops. Not troop, what do they call it for the group and he could go out and buy chickens and eggs and, because he could talk...

IA: Oh, I bet the men loved him.

Grimwood: And the local people would, would sell to him because he spoke their language so that's what they had him doing.

IA: Wow.

Grimwood: And he ended up...

IA: His company ate well.

Grimwood: he ended up being a medic, though.

IA: That's what my dad was, too.

IB: So was my husband's father was a medic in France during that war.

Grimwood: Well, see during that war period then, he had left the REO and then enlisted in the Army but when he came back, he immediately went right back to work.

IB: Right back to the REO.

IA: His job was open and he could go right back to work?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Did he know any of the owners or supervisors 'cause it wasn't real big in those days?

Grimwood: I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did. I've heard the names, I've heard the names but I didn't know any of them but he did.

IA: So he didn't, I guess to answer Shirley's original question, he didn't meet your mom there at the REO then?

Grimwood: No, no.

IA: That's not how they met.

Grimwood: No.

IA: And what, what's, I just, you know, I'm interested in some information about your mom's family since she worked there, too, the same as your dad's.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 17

Grimwood: I, was it was just, it had to be 1918 because she didn't work there very long when they met and then when they married, she quit.

IA: That was the end. Was her family from Lansing, too?

Grimwood: DeWitt.

IA: They were from DeWitt and they were farmers out there?

Grimwood: Well, actually no. My father, my grandfather was a blacksmith in the town. I'd just been, I've just been doing that a little bit, too.

IB: Oh, isn't that neat. Oh.

IA: That is very interesting.

IB: How wonderful.

Grimwood: The DeWitt-Bath newspaper has been wanting some information so I sent them a picture of him in his blacksmith shop and so I'm getting in all this history. As I said, I'm beginning to feel really old.

IA: They probably weren't, he probably wasn't real happy about the automobile becoming, becoming popular.

Grimwood: Well, it didn't, yes and no because as they got more popular, he installed gasoline pumps and...

IA: Oh, so he, he, he updated his technology, right?

IB: Well, that's what most of the blacksmith shops did. They went into this other thing. Bicycle shops did the same thing.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: But then he was a horse trainer and so after he got so he didn't do that, he trained horses, too, racing horses.

IA: So she, your mom grew up in DeWitt.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: And then came into town to get a job.

Grimwood: Yeah, she came into town to work.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 18

IA: I don't even know where to begin. I don't know which relative to ask about first.

IB: This is great. We've talked to so many people whose family, dad and uncles and aunts, you know, everybody and it just seems to be such a unique thing where you don't run into that as much or I haven't...

Grimwood: No, not now.

IB: in other places of employment like the Oldsmobile or the...

Grimwood: Well, you have to think, too, that we were not a mobile society like we are today.

IA: True.

Grimwood: Families...

IA: Stay put in one place.

Grimwood: All of my uncles and aunts lived in the south end of town which was near the plant. They walked to work. For years, I remember my father coming home for lunch and he had an hour for lunch and my mother would have his lunch ready when he walked in and he'd come home for lunch and go back to work 'cause he just lived, you know, two block. But my uncles did the same thing. They all lived right around that area. But families were tighter knit then and I'm sure it's because you couldn't jump on a plane and go. Number one you didn't have the money but number two, of course, you couldn't do that.

IB: Lifestyles have change, too.

IA: A lot of other people have told us also that, you know, sure we didn't make as much money but, you know, you didn't need as much.

Grimwood: You really didn't.

IA: You didn't need to buy as much. You did more of it on your own. You made more things.

Grimwood: I can remember during the Depression things got really tight around our house but outside of that time, I don't remember any time when it was really very bad.

IA: Or feeling scared about not having enough.

Grimwood: My parents might of but I didn't. They never transmitted that to me, I don't think.

IA: Right.

IB: So when you grew up and your brother grew up, did you have any thoughts of going into the REO to work, too, or...

Grimwood: Well, no, he did. My brother did...

IB: Your brother did, that's right. I'm sorry. You did say that. What did he do there? Production work, too?

Grimwood: Yes, I don't, I don't exactly know what he did and he was only there a short time. What'd I tell ya, five...

IB: Five years, I think.

Grimwood: About six years actually but there was a period in between there, I think he told me it was 1948 when he was laid off and he went to work for the Board of Water and Light but then when things picked up, he went back to REO and worked a short time.

IB: And then he went some place else...

Grimwood: But I don't know why, I don't know why he left either. I really don't know why he left.

IB: Well, maybe he got something better.

Grimwood: He might have.

IA: Did your parents, aside from the family which was obviously a large part of all of, you know, everybody's life that you're describing to us, did your parents have social life through the REO, I mean, the people that your dad met at the plant become people that your family was friends with?

Grimwood: Not that much because all the family lived in the south end. It was more of a family thing than it was, than it was...

IB: The coworkers.

Grimwood: They had friends but it wasn't...

IA: Necessarily through the work.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah. Were there any things that your mom did that was connected through the REO?

Grimwood: Only the short period she worked there.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 20

IA: But not um, like I know from my own research the REO had picnics for the whole family.

Grimwood: She would, they would go to those.

IA: They would go to those kind of things?

Grimwood: Yeah. They went to those. Now, I don't remember any of those.

IA: You don't?

Grimwood: But I've heard them talk about them.

IA: Where the whole family was suppose to come and she went down to the club house, too?

Grimwood: Oh, she went down there a lot, yeah.

IA: But you don't know if they had any organizations for wives or anything like that?

Grimwood: Not that I recall.

IA: Okay.

Grimwood: The only organization I really recall is that Steering Gear club...

IA: Which your dad was part of?

Grimwood: Um, hum, and they did, they did a lot of social things.

IA: Ah, huh. That was later when he became supervisor, right, because the Steering Gear was...

Grimwood: Well, it was before that, too.

IA: Oh, even...

Grimwood: Yeah.

IA: Even before that?

Grimwood: Um, hum. I don't exactly know when that was established. I really don't know much about that.

IA: I think it was sometime in the '50s, wasn't it? Oh, must of been '40s 'cause that little menu you showed us was from '48.

Grimwood: '48.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 21

IA: So it must have been some time after the War.

Grimwood: But they had, they would have dinners for ladies night, I don't know how much that was and every year they had a Christmas party which my I think it was a Santa Claus. Every child got a gift and it was a complete dinner, turkey, dressing, the whole thing.

IA: Right. We've heard about that from other people, too, and also gift baskets for poor families.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Steering Gear Club or the ladies group organized at the girl's club.

IB: This was 1948.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: I can't think of anything, most of the things I wanted to ask, we've kind of talked about. It was interesting, this, first time we've talked to anybody who was actually on one of the teams, your father being on the baseball team.

IA: Yeah.

IB: This is the first time we've been able to talk to anybody that really...

IA: Remembers that.

IB: Remembers that.

Grimwood: And when my husband went in the Navy, he was, he was playing on the team then, the baseball team. They had big, the whole team had a big party for him at the clubhouse, a going away party.

IB: A going away party.

Grimwood: And then he went in the Navy.

IB: And then when he came back...

Grimwood: And then when you speak about, about unions, when he came back, he went back to work at the REO but he wasn't there only a few weeks after he got back when they called a wildcat strike.

IA: Oh, really?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 22

Grimwood: And he quit.

IA: He didn't want to go through the strike?

Grimwood: My husband didn't like it.

IB: This would have been, somewhere in '47 or something like that, maybe?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: Hum, I didn't, my mother was working there, too, but....

IA: Yeah, I don't know much about this strike.

IB: I remember there were strikes but I didn't know about that one.

Grimwood: I don't, I don't even know what happened or what it was about or anything but I know it was a wildcat kind of a deal and they did it on the spur of the moment and he just said if that's what they're going to do, I'm done and he quit.

IB: Where did he go from there?

Grimwood: He went to Paul Automotive, actually, just, also a local business and he worked over there for some years.

IB: Was he retired from there?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: And your dad retired in what year did you tell me?

Grimwood: 1961, December the 29th, 1961.

IA: They must of given him a big party at the clubhouse.

Grimwood: They did, um, hum.

IB: A lot of people there.

Grimwood: A lot of people there.

IB: So he got his full retirement benefits and everything that the folks didn't get that were there toward the end of things?

Grimwood: Yeah, he did.

IB: It was Diamond Reo then...

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 23

Grimwood: But then when they went bankrupt, of course, it was taken over by the pension guarantee fund with...

IB: Oh, his, his pension was...

Grimwood: Well, after they, after they went bankrupt.

IA: Yeah.

IB: I didn't realize that that would affect somebody who had retired years before that.

Grimwood: Oh, yes, oh, yes, sure.

IB: I thought maybe that was already etched in stone and...

Grimwood: There was no money. When they went bankrupt, there was no money.

IA: Yeah, you can't squeeze blood out of a stone.

Grimwood: And so then it was, then he got it from, the federal, it's a federal program, the pension...

IA: That took it over.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah.

IB: And that went through the courts for several years so were people without their pension while that was dragging through the courts?

Grimwood: And if it had not been while, while he was working, they had, they initiated a contributory type retirement plan which he donated to for my mother. Had it not been for that, she would have got no retirement.

IA: Oh, my.

Grimwood: When he died.

IA: Oh, my.

Grimwood: But because it was a contributory plan, the pension fund also guaranteed that. She didn't get very much but she got a little.

IB: But she got something and that was after

Grimwood: And it was based on what he had contributed for her.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 24

IB: Oh, for goodness sake.

Grimwood: But, of course, that's what the fund was set up for, was for that type of thing.

IB: Good thing it was.

Grimwood: And it's a good thing it was.

IA: Yeah. Somebody else mentioned that that, that their pensions were taken over by that fund also. They appealed to that fund. I can't remember which one of the people we talked to.

IB: Several of the early ones, a Mr. Green talked about it.

IA: Yeah, that's right.

IB: And Mr. Garcia talked about it.

IA: That's right.

IB: We've been having a wonderful time talking to folks, you know, getting all these little views and window peeks into the past and...

IA: You know, like one woman we talked to whose dad also worked at the REO told us that she remembered sitting at home with her dad's piece rate slips and tallying up his pay every week for him.

IB: Oh, that was Mrs. Alsbruck

IA: Alsbruck, yeah. Do you remember anything like that?

Grimwood: No. To my knowledge, my dad always punched a time clock.

IA: Oh, he was on hourly, an hourly...

Grimwood: Until he got on supervision which, you know, was a salary but he was...

IA: Well, this, he must have had some kind of a piece arrangement 'cause that's what she said, that was one of her earliest memories.

Grimwood: Now, my mother was on piece rate.

IB: And she did upholstery.

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 25

Grimwood: The upholstering and I don't know how, I don't know how they figured that, whether it was per piece or whatever. I don't, I don't know how that was figured.

IB: So much per hour, I mean, being so many pieces per hour.

Grimwood: I know there, there was, you had to produce so many pieces but how that was, how that went, I don't.

IB: They probably had a production figure.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: I know she said she made very good money because she got so she was pretty clever at it.

IB: Good with her hands.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: That was really the only place in those early days that they had women in the shops, right? In the upholstery?

Grimwood: I think so. I think so.

IA: Or maybe some of the office workers.

Grimwood: And I don't really know. My aunt only worked there a short time and I don't really know where, whether that's what she did or not. I don't know that.

IA: What kind of hours did your dad have when he was working there, in the early days, do you remember?

Grimwood: Yeah, it seems like it was 7:30 to 4:30 for years and years and years and years and then during the war, he went on the 4 to 12 shift because he was a whatever. So he took that night shift.

IA: Yeah. We just talked to a guy who worked 12 hour days, seven days a week during the war.

Grimwood: Oh, they did.

IB: Oh, yes.

IA: In some of the war production.

IB: Cost, and cost plus and all that.

IA: Yeah. Couldn't imagine that.

Grimwood: When my husband worked there, that's, he, they had, they were packaging, he worked in the parts department and that was just before he went in the Navy and they packaged parts for REO trucks and they were all packed somehow in a sack and then they had to be waterproofed because they were going on the ships and...

IB: Oh, that's interesting.

Grimwood: And they were dipped in all types of things to, so that they wouldn't rust and...

IB: Visine and stuff, probably.

Grimwood: And that's what he did.

IB: Oh.

IA: When he went from different types of job, you know, as he moved his way up...

Grimwood: Now that was, my dad, yeah, yeah.

IA: Did he get training or did he learn the things on the job?

Grimwood: I'm sure along the way he got all kinds of training but he was an electrician at heart and so he really had that type of a mind and so he adapted very well which is why he worked so well in the experimental when he got there because...

IA: But they never sent him for a, for a...

Grimwood: He went to MSU a couple of times.

IA: Oh, he did, okay.

Grimwood: But they were a short thing like maybe a week or two or something like that. It was not a regular full fledged course or anything.

IA: Right, but the REO sponsored him doing that sort of thing.

Grimwood: Yes, and I can't tell you now, there may have been in that box, a couple of books that he got out there but I'm not sure that they were, I thought there was.

IB: We'll have to look through that.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Have George get that out for us. And it may be on display out there, too, I don't know. Everything's so changed around and I haven't really had time to look in

IA: And we've heard that from a lot of other people, too, that the company really invested in its workers. You know, if they felt that somebody could be good in another department or doing something higher up, they would send them for some training or teach 'em something new.

Grimwood: I'll have to tell you a little anecdote about...

IA: Good, I love those.

Grimwood: about how well known the REO was at that time. My mother would, because they lived down there, when she would go downtown, she liked to walk so she'd always walk from where they lived downtown and so she, and she would do that about once a week and so she went shopping one day and when she, whatever she purchased, she had, she forgot, she left her purse on the counter and she walked home which took her a little while. When she walked in the front door, the phone was ringing and it was my dad and he said, you lost your purse today, didn't you? She didn't know how he could of possibly find that out that quick and they had called her from the store and they had looked in her billfold. The card that they used to get into the REO movies was in her purse and they called from the store and told him that her purse was there.

IB: Isn't that interesting.

Grimwood: And before she got home, he knew that.

IB: Isn't that interesting.

IA: That's a real sign of the times. Could you imagine something like that happening today if you leave your purse?

IB: What, your, the street you lived on was right off from Washington?

Grimwood: Oh, yeah.

IB: Washington...

Grimwood: South Baptist Church is on the corner.

IB: Yeah, that's what I was trying to think.

Grimwood: The house that...

IB: Avenue.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 28

Grimwood: The house that my parents live in is the very first house past the South Baptist Church parking lot.

IB: Oh, okay.

IA: This is on Moores River Drive?

IB: Um, hum. It's right, it runs down to the park, doesn't it, down to Moores Park?

Grimwood: Um, hum. But you see the REO was on the corner of Baker Street and Washington which was, you came down Moores River Drive and take a little, not even a half a block and you're there.

IB: So I was thinking, and she walked up Washington, she went by R.E. Old's house.

Grimwood: Yes.

IB: On her way downtown.

Grimwood: Oh, I did that going to school.

IB: Did ya?

Grimwood: Um, hum. We always had to stop and look at the fish pond because they always had goldfish in it.

IB: Yes, they had a pretty yard 'cause I use to do that, too.

Grimwood: Oh, yeah, and a wrought iron fence all the way around.

IB: That's right, that's right. I'd forgotten that.

Grimwood: And a humongous big stairway, I remember standing there in awe because this, it went up this large front porch and it was monstrous.

IA: The stairway?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: And the porch, too?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: I didn't know at the time but I heard later about his turntable in the garage.

Grimwood: Oh, yeah.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 29

IB: That he could drive in off from Main Street, drive on to that and it would turn...

Grimwood: Do you know why that was, why he did that, 'cause his wife couldn't backup.

IB: I didn't know that.

Grimwood: So he put that in so that when she drive in the, the car in there and she wanted to go back out, they'd turn it around and she'd drive back out 'cause she couldn't back it out.

IA: That's great.

IB: Well, I can remember trying to drive, learn to drive when the cars were big. By golly, that was a problem. That was quite a house. I felt so bad when they tore that down.

Grimwood: I did too.

IB: And, of course, the clubhouse being torn down was another heartbreak. We've got two chairs out here from the clubhouse.

Grimwood: Right, and in that box that I gave you, are all kinds of pictures of, of the fire that destroyed the plant.

IB: Really? Oh, we've got to have a look at that.

IA: Yeah.

IB: We had a woman call, called me actually 'cause she saw the announcement in the paper that we were conducting interviews. I've got to call her and go out. She lives out to Vestaburg and I'm not even sure exactly where that is. I know it's...

Grimwood: Oh, it's off, east and south. What is it that goes through Carson City, 53?

IB: Oh, Vestaburg's that way?

Grimwood: It's county, oh, sure.

IA:

IB: I'm probably not gonna get that right away, quick.

Grimwood:

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 30

IB: But she's got a collection of photos that she took the night the plant was burned or burned, shall we say and the pictures that you've got in your box are...

Grimwood: Snapshots.

IA: Who took 'em?

Grimwood: My father took 'em.

IA: Your father took 'em.

IB: He did?

Grimwood: He felt terrible.

IB: He must of looked out and saw it starting and...

IA: There must be pictures of the day they tore the clubhouse down, too.

Grimwood: There must be pictures in there of that, too. That really, that really upset him. That really upset him. He did not want that torn down.

IB: And he was there and watched it go down?

Grimwood: And there must be some snapshots in there.

IB: Aw, I can't wait to look at that. When you brought it in at the time, I never had time to look at it 'cause back in those days, I was wearin' about eight hats and I just, and now I'm only wearing, you know, four or five.

IA: A normal life.

IB: Only now I can choose which hats I want to wear so, but anyway, I'm anxious to see those. I'd like to see those pictures. You've seen the pictures that you have in there, obviously.

Grimwood: Oh, yeah.

IB: Were those pictures of the fire when it was totally engulfed, do you remember?

Grimwood: I'm not sure it was that. I think it was more like after because I think that burned in the summertime. I think they were at the lake and when they came home, he went down and took pictures.

IA: Oh, I see.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 31

IB: Okay, okay.

Grimwood: But then they told him when they were gonna knock the clubhouse down and that's when he went down. I'm sure there were pictures, I'm sure there's snapshots in there of that.

IB: Okay, okay.

Grimwood: I was always curious to know whatever happened to the absolutely gorgeous organ they had in that.

IA: Yeah, we've been asked about that a lot.

IB: I have, we've been, a lot of people we've interviewed have talked about that organ and...

Grimwood: It was beautiful.

IB: One point here, there were two organs, one in their home and one at the clubhouse, I, and I have a feeling that the one in the clubhouse was much larger or the other way around.

Grimwood: Oh, it was a theatre organ. Yeah, the one in the clubhouse was a theatre organ. In the balcony, on the balcony, in the balcony, I can visualize it still. Up in the balcony, they had a, oh, it was as large or larger than this room with the pipes in and the loud speakers that came out and the organ was in front of it and it was a big theatre organ and they always had, it was always playing. When you would get, I don't know what time they started playing but when you would get there, we always got to the show before the 7:30 movie would start and the organist was playing at that time, concert music so that you could, and they did that before the 7:30 show and before the 9:30 show.

IB: They probably played for all other kinds of events, too. I wonder who the organist was. Probably had at one time.

Grimwood: At one time it was a lady by the name of or a young lady by the name of Emma Parr.

IB: Emma Parr.

Grimwood: P A R R.

Grimwood: That was in later years. I don't know who it was earlier on but she did it in later years.

IB: We've been given a name, right now it escapes me but someone who managed the clubhouse.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 32

IA: Yeah, he lives out, I can't remember where, Potterville or something like that.

IB: Yeah, we're gonna need to get in touch with him and he maybe can fill us in a little on that. Well, someone, called the Museum here in '87 or '88 and, from Idaho, yes, Idaho, and they had the organ out there but I have a feeling it was the organ that was in the house.

Grimwood: I think so, too, and they...

IB: They had it in their museum.

Grimwood: they had an organ room in his house.

IB: Um, hum, on the ballroom, I guess, in the ballroom and they wanted to sell the organ back to the Museum here and we got kind of excited about it for a while but it was just financially out of the question.

Grimwood: I never found out, I don't know where this one went but it was a pipe organ...

IB: Maybe we could find out sometime.

IA: Yeah, we should find out what happened to it, as much about the clubhouse as we can, really.

IB: A lot of things got trashed, that we've talked to a lot of people and different visitors who come in here over the years have said, I pulled this or that out of the trash because they were throwing it away. Jack Downs saved a lot of papers...

Grimwood: Oh, did he?

IB: and things that were gonna be just burned up or done whatever with.

Grimwood: I don't know. I don't know who had the final say so about that, to destroy things like that but I think it was terrible.

IA: Terrible, yeah.

IB: I think the city did from what I've heard.

Grimwood: That's what I thought, too, but I wasn't laying any blame.

IB: Yeah, well, since I said it I'll take the blame. It has been reported to me by anonymous sources.

IA: There you go.

IB: And who was telling us about the big chandelier that was, the Steering Gear...

IA: Oh, the Steering Gear, the Steering Gear one.

IB: that was the big chandelier in the clubhouse that, where the Steering Gear Club met and that that chandelier is somewhere in the Lansing area.

Grimwood: I don't know but I...

IA: I can't remember, it was some restaurant. I can't remember where though.

IB: Oh, I said, I wondered if it's the...

Grimwood: Oh, it's Clara's. It's Clara's.

IB: It is in Clara's?

Grimwood: I bet it's in Clara's.

IB: I went out to the, you know, Pour House Restaurant. Out behind the Pour House there's another little restaurant. It's attached to it and everything and it's gone through about four different theme changes and menu changes and in the bar area, I just happened to wander through there, there's this huge thing but I don't know if it's out there or not.

IA:

IB: But it's shaped like a big I'll have to call 'em and ask 'em.

Grimwood: I have been told that in Clara's, they have a stairway in the back that goes up to the balcony and on that post is a figure that is a lamp. Now, I've been told that that came from the R.E. Olds home.

IB: Really? Oh. That'd be easy to check. Just call Ross over there and ask him. I've gone by that many a time and never really gave it a good look.

Grimwood: I've been told. I don't know how true that is but I've been told that that came from there.

IB: I'd like to think there's some pieces in that clubhouse, you know, around in the area.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 34

Grimwood: I do, too.

IA: Can I get back to your family a little bit? I'm just curious about your dad's brothers, all your uncles who worked at the REO. Was their, were their work histories similar to his, you know, they settled in the Lansing area and got jobs at REO early on and stayed there pretty much their whole lives?

Grimwood: Um, hum. As a matter of fact, that's how come he went to work there because

IA: 'Cause he was the baby and they had all gone before him. So their oldest one must of started pretty much close to the beginning of the plant, right?

Grimwood: I think so. I think so.

IA: Just when it opened and did they, they stayed throughout much of their work lives?

Grimwood: Yeah, like I say, I think it was four of 'em that retired from there.

IA: Four that retired from there. Okay. Do you remember their names, your uncles?

Grimwood: Oh, I can tell you.

IA: They were your uncles, right?

Grimwood: Ah, huh.

IA: Yeah, and they're...

Grimwood: I'm not sure this is, I'm not sure this will be in the order of their age.

IA: Okay.

Grimwood: The first one was Rudolph.

IA: They all have German names.

Grimwood: Um, hum, and then Charlie and Julius.

IA: Great name.

Grimwood: And Otto.

IB: Oh, that's a good German name.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 35

IA: They're all German names.

Grimwood: Ah, huh.

IA: That's great.

Grimwood: Well, Fred, they, Frederick.

IA: Frederick.

Grimwood: Now, I don't know how this one got in there, Eugene.

IA: They were Americanized by then.

Grimwood: Robert, William.

IA: Your mother must have been, your grandmother was must have been very sad to have all these boys.

Grimwood: And then, and then the youngest one, Gustav, my dad.

IB: Then she had one girl.

IA: She did, oh, good.

Grimwood: Bertha.

IB: She must have been a busy mother, though, my goodness.

Grimwood: Well, my dad always used to say, there was, there was eight boys and each one had a sister.

IB: That's cute.

IA: What a clan.

IA: And without, without, you know, usually there's a older daughter in the family to help mom but this case, she...

Grimwood: Only with the younger ones.

IA: Yeah. Where did Bertha fit into all this? Was she in the middle or...

Grimwood: Ah, probably third or fourth from the end.

IA: She was, oh, somewhere in the middle.

Grimwood: She wasn't, she, yeah, kind of the middle.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 36

IA: Okay, and do you remember which one of the ones that you mentioned retired from REO?

Grimwood: Rudy did, Uncle Rudolph did and Julius did. He's the one I told you, I think he was 70 when he retired.

IA: Wow, okay.

Grimwood: And Eugene retired from there. As a matter of fact, Eugene Jr. was there when they went bankrupt.

IB: Oh, he was. Is he still in the Lansing area?

Grimwood: He's in Houghton Lake.

IB: Houghton Lake.

Grimwood: And then my dad, of course.

IA: And then your dad, okay. And the others did too, all worked there.

Grimwood: They all worked there. They...

IA: But moved on to some place else?

Grimwood: Bob ended up at General Motors.

IA: Did they all do similar...

Grimwood: And Uncle Fred ended up at John Bean.

IA: Okay.

IB: Across the street.

IA: Did they all pretty much do the same types of work, starting out pretty, on the low, on the line and then working their way up little by little?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: What a history, wow.

Grimwood: They were such a big family that, this has nothing to do with the REO but once a month during the wintertime, they would have euchre parties and they played progressive euchre because there were so many tables.

IA: These guys, these nine, eight guys?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 37

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: There wouldn't be room for them all at one table.

IA: They would get together socially?

Grimwood: Um, hum, once a month and they had prizes and food and everybody took...

IA: All the families.

Grimwood: all, all the families went.

IA: And they all had families.

Grimwood: I can remember when they, while they were playing cards, every place you looked there was a child laying on the floor sleeping.

IB: Isn't that great?

IA: It is. It's a wonderful image.

IB: close knit family.

IA: That's wonderful and they all, they all had families and lived in the Lansing area?

Grimwood: Um, hum. Bertha and Bill had, I think, six or seven children of their own. The rest of 'em didn't have that many but...

IB: So they must have gone through Walter French and Eastern, most all the kids and you and your brother.

IA: What was Bertha's married name?

Grimwood: Farr.

IA: F A R R?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Women are so hard 'cause they have so many names to keep track of 'em that way. Wow.

Grimwood: Well, Rud, I don't, did you go to Eastern?

IB: Yes.

Grimwood: Did you know Benjamin?

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 38

IB: Benjamin Leyrer, you know, I wanted to ask you that.

Grimwood: Rudolph was his father.

IB: Oh, my gosh. He was the assistant principal...

Grimwood: Well, then you know Faye

IB:, no.

Grimwood: Okay, that's his wife.

IB: My girlfriend used to babysit for them and they had a little girl.

Grimwood: Marsha, Martha.

IB: Martha?

IA: The baby's, the little girl's name was Martha?

Grimwood: Donna's age.

IA: Oh, okay. They're a little bit older.

IB: My girlfriend babysat there. I was terrified of him.

Grimwood: Probably.

IB: Because he never smiled and he always scared me. He'd been in the Navy, hadn't he.

IA: pussy cat.....

IB: Oh, now you tell me.

IA: This was Ben, Rudolph's son?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: He ended up principal at Everett High School?

IB: That's right he did. When my husband was teaching there and my husband liked him and I said, sure, you weren't a student that was, you know, had skipped school one afternoon.

Grimwood: I will tell you something that you probably, that even my daughter was surprised at when I told her, he was an absolutely pianist.

IB: Yes, I...

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 39

Grimwood: And he played by ear. He could sit down and play anything.

IB: That's right. There was, there's a piano, was a piano in their home.

Grimwood: Now the last I knew, Faye still lived there.

IB: Oh, really? Right there across from...

Grimwood: Lindberg Drive.

IB: On Lindberg Drive. Out by Potter Park.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: My girlfriend lived in the same area and that's how she, I think, probably started babysitting.

Grimwood: Well, that's Rudolph's son.

IB: Well, isn't that interesting. I thought about it right away when I saw your name was Leyrer, your maiden name and I thought, I wonder all of 'em are connected. They're all connected.....

IA: All connected.

IB: Tell me.

IA: There's enough of those.

IB: Are there, there's lots of little Leyrers running around yet, then, so you still...

Grimwood: Oh, yes.

IB: all get together?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: Like you used to.

Grimwood: They have, we have, well, I don't go much but they had a reunion every year. Of course, all of the older ones are now gone. They're all, so this is all my cousins.

IA: Oh, I see. God, I just wish I could have been at some of those euchre parties, listen to what they said about their work.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 40

Grimwood: Oh, that would have been interesting because like I say, they all worked there.

IA: Right, so they must of talked about...

Grimwood: I would imagine.

IA: things that went on at work.

Grimwood: Of course, it was terrible. You wouldn't of understood them because what they didn't want you to know, they talked in German.

IA: German.

IB: Well, that's clever.

Grimwood: But then when they found out that some of us kids could understand it a little bit, they had to switch around.

IB: All the bad words So, do you speak German?

Grimwood: No.

IB: No?

Grimwood: No, and I'm, I've gotten away from it so much now, I don't understand it but I did understand quite a lot of it. Well, my grandmother, like I said, lived right next door to us and so as, the older she got, as she got older, she would lapse into, more into German and so she talked...

IB: Her native tongue.

Grimwood: a little bit, my husband had a terrible time. He'd say, what'd she say? What'd she say because it was half German and half English.

IA: Oh, yeah.

Grimwood: And I could understand it fairly well but I've gotten really away from it now.

IB: When you're not using it every day and every day.

Grimwood: But her son is taking it in school now.

IB: Oh, that's great.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 41

IA: Get back to the roots, huh? Did all the wives of these boys pretty much stayed home and took care of their families?

Grimwood: Um, hum, yes.

IA: They didn't have to go out to work or anything like that.

Grimwood: No, most of them didn't.

IA: No, they didn't which meant...

Grimwood: And it was interesting, too, because like I said, they all lived in the south part of town so that it was nothing for one of 'em to walk over to the other one's house to visit for the afternoon or have tea or whatever. You know, take the children along, the children played together while they had, chitchatted.

IA: So they had a lot of family support, too.

IB: And they probably were all there to help.

Grimwood: And they kept, they kept it that way, you know, because they, and they, the men would be at work, the women would go visit.

IB: When they had time, with those big families.

Grimwood: Well, but, you know, they took the time.

IB: Oh, sure.

Grimwood: Of course, those were the days where you did the spring cleaning and the fall cleaning and all that in between, you know, the baking and the ironing and the...

IB: Washing.

Grimwood: The washing....

IB: But the ironing, baskets of it.

IA: Yeah, there was a lot more household work that was real work, you know, not just throwing some clothes into the washer...

Grimwood: But they still had time to go over, you know, go visit.

IB: But, you know, they organized their week. You did certain things on certain days.

Grimwood: They did.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 42

IB: And that's how you got the work done.

Grimwood: That's right.

IB: Otherwise you'd be lost.

IA: Um, they got most of their provisions and food and stuff from local stores, right, local grocery stores in the area?

Grimwood: Um, hum. Now you're gonna ask me where they are and I don't know.

IA: No, no, I'm just curious 'cause, you know, a lot of the, this, yours wasn't really a farming family anymore but a couple of other people we've talked to had relatives out in the, in the outlying areas who were still on farms and some of them used to say that in hard times they would go out there and get some things to tie them over. So that's why I was curious.

Grimwood: Well, of course, my parents had a huge garden.

IA: Oh, they kept a garden still?

Grimwood: Oh, well, most of 'em did.

IA: They had gardens.

Grimwood: They had a garden plot in the backyard.

IA: Yeah. Did any of them, did they mostly own their own homes?

Grimwood; Yes.

IA: Houses, and did the REO help 'em with any of that, mortgage or...

Grimwood: No, no.

IA: Nothing, okay.

Grimwood: I, at that particular point in time, I don't think that was even, they even thought of anything like that.

IA: Okay, yeah. I still have to do more work on this but I think the REO Company did own some land that houses of workers lived on.

Grimwood: They might have.

IA: I don't know, I don't know if the actually...

IB: Could be rental houses, probably.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 43

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: I'm not aware of that. Our family...

IB: Not these proud Germans.

IA: They wanted to own their property. Well, and they could and that's great, I mean, that's good, too, that they were able to do that. Most of the people we've talked to owned their own homes. There have been a couple that didn't but most of them did.

IB: I think REO was a very important part of the Lansing community.

Grimwood: Oh, it was. It was and it's just too bad that it ever, you know, did, went the way it did.

IA: Well, the story of your handbag, of your mom's handbag showed that everybody knew the REO and everybody could identify somebody who worked at the REO and knew

Grimwood: And on Friday afternoons, after school when they would have these matinees, I can't remember exactly whether they started at 4 or 4:30 or something like that. We always went to school until 3:30 in the afternoon and I think it was something like 4:30, I can, I've talked to children that came from all parts of the city. They'd walk down railroad tracks or they'd walk down, well, what we used to call the river trail which was along the Grand River, you know, and it was...

IA: That's what you did, right?

Grimwood: And they came from all over the city, the place was packed with kids coming to that movie because it was free and I saw my very first talking picture there.

IA: What was it?

IB: Remember remember what it was?

Grimwood: Jackie Cooper in the Champ.

IB: That's wonderful. That's a great classic, too.

IA: I'm a real old movie buff so I love things like that. Well, that's great.

Grimwood: Actually, I can remember one that was there, it was before the talkies and that was, Mystery of the Wax Museum and all the kids were behind the seats because it was such a scary movie.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 44

IB: That was my experience with Tom Sawyer, too. When they went in the cave, I...

Grimwood: Oh, yeah.

IB: And there was a science fiction one always talking about.

Grimwood: Oh, there was one and I don't remember the name of that one. I wish I could remember that. Way back when I was a child and this was at, suppose to be a picture of the future...

IB: Oh, yeah.

Grimwood: and it was way ahead of its time. There were no automobiles. Everything was airplanes. The policemen were in balloons that were, they were anchored to the ground but they were in a balloon to direct the air traffic. They had television. When somebody came to your home and rang the doorbell, the television screen came on and you could see who was down there and I was...

IA: Just like contemporary surveillance.

IB: Wow, that's frightening.

Grimwood: I was a child. I was a child. The plot of the thing was, this man went out and was playing golf and he got hit on the head with a golf ball and it knocked him out and when he came to, this was what was happening and it was all into the future.

IB: My goodness.

Grimwood: And I don't, I, the name is gone completely from me. I would love to remember what that was.

IA: But you obviously remember the film very vividly.

Grimwood: But I remember that very well. It just impressed me so.

IB: It was way ahead of its time, wasn't it?

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: It was in black and white. It wasn't even in color.

IB: Right.

Grimwood: It was that far out, you know, far back.

IA: And it was a silent or was it a talkie?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 45

Grimwood: Now that I don't remember. It seems like it was a talkie.

IA: It was a talkie.

Grimwood: I think so but it was a black and white one. I recall that vividly and now that I've, you know, I've told my children about it because now we have the television and we have the airplanes that go all over and all this...

IB: But it's still really futuristic with the idea of the caller at the door being on your T.V. monitor, type of thing.

Grimwood: But I do not recall, I don't even recall who the actors were or anything but I, it was so impressed on me, I just, I told them about it so many times and I saw that at the REO.

IB: It probably was in the '30s?

Grimwood: Probably, yeah.

IB: I would think it would have been a talkie then.

Grimwood: Yeah, I think it was talkie.

IB: The sound came in the '20s.

Grimwood: It was not a color.

IB: No. I don't think we got color till the late '30s. Wizard of Oz
.....

IA: Wizard of Oz was '39 and that was a big deal.

IB: Technicolor was a brand new process.

IA: Big deal. Did your dad ever say anything about how the REO changed over the years when he was there?

Grimwood: Yeah, of course it did, I mean, with the advent of the union, that changed a lot, you know.

IA: Um, hum, in terms of the benefits and things.

Grimwood: During the war years, it changed a lot because they, at that particular time, and he was a foreman and he had to hire so many women which they had never had before.

IA: Right. How did he feel about that?

Grimwood: He didn't mind it.

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 46

IA: He didn't think, it was for the war effort so.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: Did he think there were any real problems having women in the shop?

Grimwood: The only problem I ever remember either him or my husband ever talking about was how sloppy they were in their bathrooms. They said they were worse than men ever thought of being.

IB: Is that right?

IA: Oh, that's funny.

Grimwood: He didn't, and they were always complaining about this wasn't working and the, you know, either the toilet was stopped up or something.

IA: Oh, oh, dear.

Grimwood: But there is one thing that, Dale Robertson, the movie star...

IB: Um, hum.

Grimwood: You know who he is, had the REO build him a customized horse trailer that was air conditioned and it was a real deluxe type job and he personally, when it was done, he came to contract for it and when it was done, he personally came and picked it up and I don't know what happened to the picture but my father met him because he was one of the people who helped to do this.

IB: Oh, is that right?

Grimwood: And he had his picture taken...

IB: Oh, your father was...

Grimwood: with him and the trailer. I don't know what happened to the picture.

IB: Oh, I hope you come across it some time.

Grimwood: I can't find it.

?: I can remember that. I can remember going down to the plant and taking

IB: Really?

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 47

?: Where he came to pick up his trailer....

IB: He was a very handsome man, wasn't he?

?: And they threw out the big double doors where the truck came out and

Grimwood: But I don't know what happened to the picture. I, the picture's gone.

?: I don't either and I remember seeing it.

Grimwood: I can't find it.

IB: Was there a big crowd of people that came?

Grimwood: Oh, yes.

?: All the workers and all the families and it was a big, I can remember, because it was a big day. We toured the plant that day and then they had, I think it was ice cream and cake...

Grimwood: I think ice cream and cake or something.

?: or something in the clubhouse.

IA: For the kids?

?: Yeah, we all went over there.

IB: What do you remember about what the shop looked like inside? That, was that your first time in the shop or...

?: No, it wasn't my first time but I can remember, the thing I was really impressed about was how they dipped the parts into these big vats of paint. I just thought that was the greatest thing, you know.

IB: Like dipping an ice cream cone.

?: Yeah, you know, then putting them on the assembly lines and they'd dip 'em down and then come back up and they were all painted.

IB: All the different parts of the trucks?

?: Um, hum.

IB: And were you surprised at the noise or the...

?: Not really. I mean, when you walked by, you know, it'd be noisy.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 48

Grimwood: The thing I think about in which, which in the end made it burn for such a long time and they had such a time getting it out was, in some of the parts of the plant, they had wooden block floors and they were saturated with oil.

IA: That's right, we've heard about that.

Grimwood: And that's what made it burn for such a long time and why they couldn't put it out.

IA: We've heard also every once in a while, one of those blocks would disappear so there'd be these big, there'd be these holes when you were walking there.

IB: My mother talked about the stock truck driver who went, his, on his stock truck, went through one of those older floors and was killed.

Grimwood: Oh, really.

IB: I remember that so clearly. His name was Johnny and he was apparently a very small wiry kind of person and he was older. This was during the war I think.

?: You know, I just was thinking, too, when my husband first graduated from high school in '64, he went to work for Coke and he used to deliver Coke to the

Grimwood: That's right.

?: I just was thinking about that when you were talking about that 'cause he kept talking about those wooden floors.

Grimwood: Speaking about that, I neglected to tell 'em that my grandfather worked there, too, at one time. During the War, he was an older man, the one that had the blacksmith shop I told you about.

IA: From DeWitt?

Grimwood: From DeWitt and they needed somebody to restock the candy machines and do that type of thing and sweep and do a little maintenance and everything and he went to work there. He worked there for awhile, I think two years during the War.

IA: This was...

Grimwood: Grandpa Kevler.

IA:

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 49

Grimwood: My mother's father.

IA: Your mother's dad. Do you remember what his first name was, beside Grandpa?

Grimwood: Frank.

IA: Frank.

Grimwood: I think he worked there two years during the War.

IA: So during World War I?

Grimwood: Um, hum, and he stocked the candy machines and he was an older man so he couldn't do anything really physical but he would sweep if they needed sweeping done or cleaning up or whatever.

IB: A handyman.

Grimwood: As a matter of fact, I think his badge is in that box, too.

IB: Really?

Grimwood: And I think my dad's badge is in that box. I can tell you his badge number. I even wrote that down.

IB: Oh, my goodness.

IA: Your dad's?

Grimwood: Ah, huh. Clock number is what they called it.

IA: That's right.

IB: Oh, that's right, they did.

Grimwood: 90-4165

IA: There's something else. Oh, more about this, how things have changed. Did he ever talk about how the production changed or...

Grimwood: Well, of course, early on they weren't as mechanized as they were later on.

IA: Right. He started in 1918.

Grimwood: With the paint she was telling about, you know, they did everything, sprayed painted and that type of thing but, well, and like I said, my mother did the hand upholstering and they did everything but the...

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 50

IB: Oh, hand, by hand?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: My dad owned, as a matter of fact, three REOs. He had a 1920 and a 1929 and a 1936 REO.

IB: Oh, he had one of the last ones?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: So even right at the beginning he was able to afford a car, too?

Grimwood: Oh, yes. That's how my mother got him.

IB: I want to hear this. Now, how did this happen?

Grimwood: My mother was, was rooming and boarding, while she worked at the REO, she was rooming and boarding with my father's brother Fred that's on there, because her family lived in DeWitt and so she stayed here in town and Fred kept telling her, when my younger brother gets home from the Army, you have to meet him.

IA: She was boarding with his family, right? She had a room in his family's house?

Grimwood: Um, hum, and ah, so when he got back, that's what he did. He bought a car and when she came home one night from a, she went home every weekend to DeWitt, when she came home on a Sunday night, this car was in the driveway, a brand new beautiful car and so when she walked in, Uncle Fred said, I want you to meet my younger brother Gus and she said, boy, she said, if I had a car like that, I'd be going for a ride. I wouldn't be sitting in here and he said, well, come on and go with me. So she did. So the next weekend she went, when she went home to DeWitt she told her boyfriend she was no longer interested.

IA: So we can say in this case really, a REO brought them together.

IB: That's a very unique story.

Grimwood: And you'd have to know my mother. My mother's a very shy person and I cannot, I did not hear that story for, until I was, years, years and years later and I just looked at her and I said, mother, I can't believe that you did that because she wasn't that type of a person at all. But she did then and she got him.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 51

IB: Must of been a little guardian angel sitting here and saying, this is the one. That's a real romance.

Grimwood: I hadn't thought of it that way but a REO did bring them together.

IA: A REO brought them together (end side 1)

IB: What year was that, a 19...

Grimwood: 20.

IB: A 20, um, hum.

IA: Oh, that was just beautiful.

Grimwood: Great big.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: They had a fabric top, you know, and if it rained, you put these side curtains on and had running boards and...

IB: But it didn't have roll up and roll down windows?

Grimwood: Didn't have any windows.

IB: Didn't have any windows, 1920.

Grimwood: They had, in these side curtain deals, well, it was always open but if you put the, in the wintertime, they had these little izing glass, little things, you know.

?: Some of those parts from those cars, Kyle brought down here.

Grimwood: That's right. My grandson that, when he moved into the house and cleaning out the garage found a lot of parts which he, which he brought down.

IB: Oh, are they all part of the same donation, I mean,

Grimwood: He brought 'em down separately.

IA:

Grimwood: He brought 'em down after I brought mine.

IB: Okay.

Grimwood: His name is...

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 52

IA: They got to be around here somewhere.

Grimwood: His name is Kyle. He said that he and his wife brought 'em down.

IB: Kyle Grimwood?

Grimwood: Um, hum, and there should be some parts of some kind.

?: Well, didn't he, didn't he bring down the lawn mower, too?

Grimwood: He was gonna bring down a lawn mower but they said they had enough of 'em, they didn't want it so.

IB: We've got, like a back room full of lawn mowers.

Grimwood: That's how I got it at my house.

?: Parts and stuff. We used to think, like I can remember when we were little, in grandpa's garage, we used to think there was a whole garage, I mean a whole car in parts in that garage 'cause there were so many parts.

Grimwood: He used to do repairing.

IB: All these parts were real cars.

?: Yeah.

IA: He liked to do that tinkering stuff.

Grimwood: And he repaired cars for people a lot of times. They'd ride, come over and especially REOs because that's what he knew and they'd say this is making this kind of a noise or making this kind of a noise. What do you think it needs and he'd replace them. But he did that and so, of course, he had all these parts in the garage.

IA: Besides the women in World War II, did he ever say anything about the types of people, how it changed over time at REO?

IB: With maybe the quality of the people and how good of worker they were, you mean?

Grimwood: Oh, I'm sure that's true because that was the thing that happened all over. I don't think there's any people that has loyalty to a plant...

IA: Anymore.

Grimwood: Anymore like they had then.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 53

IA: Yeah, so he, he could see that that's changing or he's, you think that he thought that that was changing?

Grimwood: Oh, sure. I think so. Well, I've heard him say so.

IA: You did?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah, towards the end of the time he was there, after the War?

Grimwood: Yeah, towards the end, yeah, but times did change because they employed so many females for one thing which was completely different, you know, 'cause they didn't...

IA: Right, starting with the War, yeah.

IB: A lot of those kept their jobs after the War, too, didn't they?

Grimwood: They did what?

IB: A lot of the women kept their factory jobs...

Grimwood: Oh, sure.

IA: Some of them did, yeah.

IB: After the War. Not all of them but a lot of 'em.

Grimwood: When I graduated, I worked at Oldsmobile for a while just before I got married but they had a hard and fast rule at Oldsmobile that if you married, you had to quit.

IB: Oh, really?

Grimwood: You couldn't work there so when I got engaged, I had to quit and then the War came along and right after that, they were clamoring for people, women.

IB: Yeah.

IA: Did they never reinstitute anything like that, a marriage bar or anything after that?

Grimwood: No, no.

IB: That War turned the world upside down for all kinds of ways.

Grimwood: It did.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 54

IB: Changed everything. A lot of people came in from the south. A lot of people came from other parts of our country to work in the shops...

IA: And Lansing just grew, too, 'cause different people were coming here for work.

Grimwood: Yes, it did and it was more of a little family type town, too, for such a long time, you know, and it just grew.

IA: Do you think that, do you think it was World War II, that was the period that it changed or was it later?

Grimwood: Well, I think that probably started it but I think it was later when it really got, you know, when the other factories grew, got...

IA: Like BOC?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Yeah. I think that changed the, the makeup and the tone of the town.

Grimwood: But I can remember for years before she was born, during the War years, my two boys were very small and every truck they ever saw was a REO truck. That was grandpa's REO truck. Every truck was grandpa's REO truck.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Well, you saw, a REO was on the street all the time whether they were owned or being test driven, everything was a REO.

Grimwood: Well, I've, I've seen some still.

IA: We just saw one the other day. It was a beat up old one but we saw one.

?: I can even remember that, though, even after it was Diamond Reo. There was a lot of trucks on the street that were from testing.

IA: Right, testing. We just asked somebody where were the REO trucks tested and he said on the street.

Grimwood: Ah, yeah, all around town.

IB: I remember that when I was growing up, too. They looked so funny with maybe not even the cab, maybe just the driver's seat on the chaises.

?: And of course the amphibious trucks, they went out to...

IB: Did you ever see one of those?

?: Oh, yeah.

IB: You did?

?: Grandpa worked, and that was his baby.

Grimwood: That was his baby.

?: He worked on his, that truck.

Grimwood: He loved that. He thought that was quite a thing and nothing ever came of it really.

IA: The Eager Beaver and you saw it tested in the river?

?: Yeah, they went out to...

Grimwood: The gravel pit.

?: Grovenburg park out there is where they tested it. That's all in that box, too, of all that test. It showed the map of where it was...

Grimwood: Now, those are photographs, too.

?: There's photographs of the test...

Grimwood: But all this drawing is in there, too, the measurements and things.

IB:

Grimwood: Diagram of where they tested it on the water is in there.

?: I can remember him sitting though at the kitchen table at home at night...

Grimwood: Drawing.

?: drawing and thinking it out. We had to use so much styrofoam tomorrow to make it float.

Grimwood: Make it float.

?: And, oh, that one didn't work so now we've got to try, I can remember seeing him do that night after night.

IB: So he helped design the Eager Beaver?

?: Yes.

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IA: Well, he really went a, came a long way.

Grimwood: Oh, he came a long way.

IA: From where he started.

IB: Really, and then he'd go with them to test it.

Grimwood: And it was, it was basically his loyalty to the plant that really, he did all kinds of, like she said, at home that, you know, was over and above the call of duty.

IA: Right, right.

Grimwood: And he did that for a long time. I can remember him coming home and drawing little bitty lines on things and putting, marking as to measurement and all that to take back to work the next day and that was....

IA: Yeah, and actually I think, in addition to the people we've been interviewing saying the family, about the family feeling, the other thing that I think almost everybody's talked about is how proud they were of what REO made, the trucks and the cars.

Grimwood: They were.

IA: The cars in the beginning and then the trucks eventually, just no matter who they were, no matter where they worked...

Grimwood: Proud to tell people where they worked.

IA: Right, and it didn't matter whether they were in the factory or management or office or, all of them have said that they thought that the REO truck was the best.

IB: That's remarkable, too, because you don't see a finished product when you work in the factory and so I think that's especially interesting to think that they feel proud of that product because you rarely ever see the finished car. You know, you see this piece that you do in a day but you...

IA: But you can't company the way that your dad was unless you feel really strongly about what the company's doing.

Norma Grimwood

3-26-92

Page 57

Grimwood: They would send him, they sent him to some place in Pennsylvania one time and they sent him a couple of times to Ohio. When they would have a problem with a truck breaking down or whatever and they couldn't figure out, places down there couldn't figure out what the problem was, they would take him down there and he would figure it out and drive 'em home or get 'em on the road or whatever. Many times he's done that.

IB: Harrisburg maybe where the factory is now that still makes the trucks.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: That doesn't sound right but maybe that's where it was, I don't know, and I know several places in Ohio that he went down. The plant would send a car up, a driver and a car up for him and take him and bring him back.

IB: That's interesting.

Grimwood: He did that for...

IB: So he was like an area rep.

Grimwood: Kind of, yeah.

IA: Troubleshooter.

IB: Yeah, being a representative, a factory rep.

Grimwood: I guess it was maybe, too, because he could figure out by listening or looking.

IB: He must have been really good.

Grimwood: He was. I thought he was.

IB: A good mechanical mind.

Grimwood: Of course, I'm prejudice but, but I thought he was. And of course, like I say, he had all that loyalty to the plant that you don't find much anymore.

IA: No.

Grimwood: And my mother had it, too, even though she only worked there a short time, because it was his livelihood and it got 'em where they were, she had it, too. And of course, it went down to my kids. They had it, too.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 58

IB: So when you graduated from high school, you probably covered this earlier in, my memory, did you go, you said you worked at Olds for a little while?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: Did you go from high school to that?

Grimwood: I went to business college and then I went to Olds.

IB: Oh, okay, and did you work in the office there?

Grimwood: Yes, I loved it. I worked, it was the very first hydromatic drive and I helped to put the new owner's manual together for that.

IA: Oh, my!

IB: You did? That's must of been the '40 model 'cause the business coupe we got out here, it's one of the first hydromatics. That's a '40.

Grimwood: That would have been about that time, yeah.

IB: '39 or '40.

Grimwood: Yeah, it would have been about that time. I loved it. That was really interesting.

IB: I'll be darned.

Grimwood: I did the paste-ups and the typing and the...

IA: That was almost like publishing, you know, like desktop publishing.

Grimwood: But see, that's another place where the REO was way ahead of its time because they had an automatic transmission...

IA: Oh, that's right.

Grimwood: before Oldsmobile ever thought of it.

IA: That's right.

Grimwood: My dad had one. I don't remember, I don't know which car it was but he had one.

IB: There was something else, too.

Grimwood: But people wouldn't buy it. They were afraid of it.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 59

IB: Yes, that's true. Yeah.

Grimwood: They wouldn't buy it.

IB: Like us with an electric car, I suppose we're thinking, well, I don't know.

Grimwood: Well, see, my husband worked in the automotive parts for years and years and he said there's no reason we couldn't of had a electric car years ago.

IA: Yeah.

IB: Well, years and years ago, Mrs. Olds had an electric car.

Grimwood: Yup, well, our neighbor had one.

IB: A 1901 or 2 or 3 or something like.

Grimwood: Our neighbor had one.

IB: Really?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: Then, of course, it was just for toodling around town but that's basically what the other ones are gonna be for.

Grimwood: Oh, no. No.

IB: They'll go a little faster.

Grimwood: The one that they really developed, that got built in Florida would go miles, miles and miles.

IB: Well, they're gonna have to because in California, that's gonna become a law in a few years for freeways.

Grimwood: My husband said they could have developed a battery many, many years ago that would go a long ways.

IB: Well, the gasoline companies have got...

Grimwood: Of course, that's the other thing, too, he said, they could have made a car that would have gone 5 or 600 miles on a tank of gas, too, but you see, the oil just ...

IB: Well, they could make a car that wouldn't wear out, too, but then who'd buy a new car. You know, it's all tied up in politics...

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 60

Grimwood: It is. It is.

IB: and it's tied up in economics. Isn't necessarily what we're capable of developing...

Grimwood: Sure, and I think that's part of the reason that, I think the REO would have been in business probably still if they'd of kept on manufacturing the cars but they didn't.

IB: Well, and their trucks, too, really.

Grimwood: And their trucks. But, of course, once they started selling off parts of it, everybody that bought it took something out of it.

IA: Yeah.

Grimwood: So it was gone.

IA: Yeah, it lost its integrity, a lot of this.

Grimwood: Well, it lost its identity because it was no longer a REO.

IB: Almost like our cars now. Like the Oldsmobile isn't really an Oldsmobile any more. The parts are from all over the world.

Grimwood: That's right. They want you to buy American but how can you do that.

IB: How do you know.

Grimwood: You can't do it because everything is shipped in from some place else and they just put it together.

IA: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Grimwood: But I think that when they lost their identity with that, that quality, that was the end.

IB:, too. And then, of course, when you get management that comes in and doesn't have that loyalty feeling, doesn't have a feeling of wanting to make the place a success, and that we've heard people say, too, that the building was getting so old and there were so many big, expensive repairs that needed to be made that that was an economic drain.

Grimwood: Except if they had kept it up when it should have been kept up which they would have...

IA: Along the way.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 61

Grimwood: You know, it wouldn't have been that way. I mean, Oldsmobile is not a new plant by any way, shape or form and they still keep, keep going.

IB: Keep reinvesting, putting money back into the...

Grimwood: And look at the building down there that I say is a truck plant, down there on the corner of Washington and Mt. Hope, I mean, that's warehouses now and what is it, Naked Furniture is in there and...

IB: So the building is still good?

Grimwood: Um, hum. So. Well, as a matter of fact, I forgot what they called the plant across Baker Street that they had a ramp that went across for years and years and they still, they got all those little stores and shops in there now. It used to, it was eventually John Bean but...

IB: Oh, it was and John Bean

Grimwood: Yeah, but that was partly REO, too.

IB: Yes, it was at one time.

Grimwood: For years that was REO and they had a walkway that went across Baker Street that you, that went across. I remember going across

IB: Did you? I remember going under it on the bus.

Grimwood: Yeah, well, across it.

IB: It was like a big catwalk like is over the river here from the Lansing Center to the hotel. It was that kind of thing. Wasn't that pretty but...

Grimwood: No, it wasn't. I can't remember what they called that part of the plant now, though. I know that was the truck plant down there...

IB: Well, somebody told us early on in our interviewing process, it might have been Mr. Green right at the start, I'll have to listen to that tape again, he talked about that. In fact, I didn't realize, you know, that that had been part of the REO. To me, I knew it as the John Bean and the Nash Kelvinator(?)... during the War, and so I didn't realize eventually it was REO.

Grimwood: Yeah, see now, Nash Kelvinator was also down in, what they, what I'm calling the truck plant for a while, too.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 62

IB: Oh, was it?

Grimwood: That part of the REO plant.

IB: On Washington and...

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: And Mt. Hope.

Grimwood: And back in behind that truck plant there on Washington, it was, was the Reo Park and that's where they played ball.

IB: Oh, really? Oh, just to the south of that?

Grimwood: Um, hum, yes.

IB: Okay.

Grimwood: Now, they played ball there still when my husband was playing, just before the War.

IB: Is that right? Would that have gone over as far as what we used to call the old fair grounds, at Logan and...

Grimwood: No, not that far down.

IB: Not that far south, huh?

Grimwood: Not that far down.

IA: I've read a lot about the sports, baseball. They had bowling in the clubhouse.

Grimwood: They had, we had bowling down in the basement, yes.

IA: Right, and the city, they were a part of the city leagues and they'd always get really excited about how well the REO people were gonna do in the city leagues.

Grimwood: Now they had bowling, they had bowling teams right up until just almost before they, before they went bankrupt.

IA: Ah, huh, yeah, in the clubhouse still?

Grimwood: No, not in the clubhouse but they had, they....

IB: That would sponsor, they

IA: bowl.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 63

Grimwood: I don't remember, they, they took the bowling alley out of the clubhouse for, years and years ago. They eventually moved it down in the basement of what was the Michigan Theatre.

IB: Was that the old REO bowling alley?

Grimwood: Yes, yes.

IB: In the, arcade?

Grimwood: Um, hum.

IB: I bowled down there. Well, I bowled. I was there.

Grimwood: Well, that was moved from the REO down there.

IB: I didn't know that. That is interesting and now it's all offices.

Grimwood: Is it? I haven't been down there in years and years.

IB: Well, it breaks your heart.

IA: There's another game that I read that they played. This may have been, I don't know if you would have known about it. I think it was called Quats or Quaits.

IB: Quaits. It was like a, ring toss sort of thing.

IA: Oh, that's right.

Grimwood: I don't know. That I don't...

IB: It'd be like horseshoes only it's a, it's a rope type of ring...

IA: Oh, ah, huh.

IB: that you throw. I think it's...

IA: These are just things that I read about in the Spirit when I read the Spirit and they would talk about the guys going out and doing this and..

Grimwood: And one of those and it's not one that I had, that I brought down but in one of those Spirit, it tells about my birth.

IA: Oh, really. That's quite, they did announce that and they had pictures of babies in there, too.

Grimwood: My picture was not in.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 64

- IA: Oh, okay. I remember they also had an article about a premature baby that was born to one of the REO workers 'cause I had a premature baby.
- IB: I wonder if they'd let you take some of the Spirits home from here. I've never had a chance to look.
- Grimwood: The reason mine was in was because at one time I was the only baby in Lansing that was born on Christmas Day.
- IA: Ooooooooooh.
- IB: Oh, you were a Christmas baby. Oh, so that was extra special.
- IA: Yeah.
- Grimwood: And my dad's birthday was the 24th so.
- IB: Oh, is that right?
- IA: And yours was Christmas Day.
- IB: You must of gotten your picture or something in the Lansing State Journal then, too, being a Christmas baby.
- Grimwood: I didn't get my picture in but I've got a clipping from there.
- IA: That's what kind of thing that they would have made a big deal about in the Spirit.
- IB: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.
- IA: Yeah, yeah.
- Grimwood: Yeah, I think, I think several times it was in as being the only Christmas baby that was born but then later on there were a lot of them.
- IB: Well, they were just copy cats.
- IA: My mom was born on January 2nd and her parents used to give her so much grief 'cause if she had been born one day before that, they would have won some money.
- IB: Oh, that's right. The first baby of the new year.
- IA: So she got off on the wrong foot with that one.
- IB: Right from the start.

Norma Grimwood
3-26-92
Page 65

IA: Right.

Grimwood: Well, what else can I tell you, anything?

IB: I can't think of anything.

IA: This is the kind of thing, I've got to go home and then I'll probably have 10 more questions but I can't think of anything right now.

IB: Me either.

IA: Thanks a lot for talking to us.