

Frances Barnhart
3-12-92
Page 1

IA: Interview with Frances Barnhart on March 12, 1992, Thursday
afternoon, 2:00 p.m. at her home at 555 Norman Street in Lansing,
48910. Testing, interview with Frances Barnhart.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 1

IB: This is Shirley Bradley and Lisa Fine. We are at the home of Frances Barnhart, 555 Norman Street, Lansing, Michigan and we are going to be talking to her about her memories of the Reo Motor Car Company. And this is March 9, 1993. Okay we usually just start our interviews by getting some background information about the individuals who did the Reo. And actually you were already starting to tell us a little bit about um, all the different people in your family or your husband's family that worked there. Um, you weren't from Lansing then? Were you from

Barnhart: Oh yes, I've lived in Lansing all my life.

IB: Okay, so you were born here?

Barnhart: Oh yeah.

IB: But not in this particular neighborhood.

Barnhart: No, not in this particular neighborhood. No.

IB: Where did you grow up in Lansing?

Barnhart: Over on Bement Street.

IB: Okay. Did any of your family work at the Reo as well or just your husband?

Barnhart: Not my immediate family.

IB: Not your immediate family.

Barnhart: I had an uncle that worked for Reo years ago.

IB: Okay.

Barnhart: When they were making cars. During the Depression when they had the Reo clubhouse and I used to come over there to the movies.

IB: As a child you did that?

Barnhart: As a child, yes.

IB: Yeah. So even though your father, mother and so forth didn't, you still went over to the Reo to participate in the

Barnhart: Oh yeah. Some of the people, the men in the neighborhood worked at the Reo and, of course, they had passes to get into the clubhouse, so we would kind of gang up and get in there.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 2

IB: Sneak in? You aren't the first person who has told us that. ... they snuck in to see the movies.

Barnhart: We weren't supposed to be there, but we got in anyway.

IB: Ah huh, ah huh. Um, and you went to school in Lansing too?

Barnhart: Ah huh.

IB: Which high school did you go to?

Barnhart: Oh I went to ah, Pattengill

IB: Okay.

Barnhart: That's a junior high.

IB: Oh, Pattengill, okay.

Barnhart: (can't hear, have volume all the way up)

IB: Okay.

Barnhart: And the Old Central.

IB: And then, oh. Ah huh. And when did you, did you start working at Reo after school or were there some other jobs in between?

Barnhart: Oh I started working at Reo in 1942.

IB: Okay. (loud hum) During the war?

Barnhart: Right.

IB: Okay. Um, what did you do before you worked at Reo? Before you started working there?

Barnhart: I worked at Kresges.

IB: Behind the counter?

Barnhart: Well yeah, just all of it. Back then you were all over. I was in charge of different departments.

IB: Oh really?

Barnhart: At different times.

IB: Ah huh, okay.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 3

Barnhart: And ah, I worked there for about eleven years.

IB: Okay, and you started working at Reo in 1942.

Barnhart: Right.

IB: Why did you, did you shift because of the war? Because you wanted to work in the defense industry?

Barnhart: To make more money.

IB: To make more money. (laughter) Okay. Alright. A lot more than you would be making at Kresge.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: Yeah, it must have been quite a change going from Kresge's dime store to the factory. What impressed you at first when you first walked into the factory?

Barnhart: Well, it ah, of course, having worked in the dollar store and being familiar with selling tools, hardware and things of that nature it did not scare me so much because I was familiar with machinery and handling the tools, but of course, they were a lot much bigger than anything that I had seen. And ah, so ah, and, of course, when I first went to Reo, I did when you first went in there why you went and you did bench work like burring

IB: Burring?

Barnhart: all the small parts had to be sanded by hand or take the burrs off from the

IB: Just to rub them down.

IA: Little rough places or

Barnhart: I worked there for a while and then they put me on machines. Most of the time that I ah, from 1942 until end of the war in 1945, I worked on machines.

IB: Starting at burring and then on machines.

IA: What department were you in? Were in in the same department the entire time?

Barnhart: I was in the Navy Department.

IA: In the Navy Department.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 4

IB: Oh the Navy.

IA: That's where they made bomb fuses.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: And so that's what you worked on?

Barnhart: That's what I worked on. I worked on just about every machine in the shop.

IA: Did you find it difficult to run the machines? It doesn't sound like it?

Barnhart: No, it didn't bother me.

IA: They gave you a training period?

Barnhart: Well, not too much. Here is the machine you work on.

IB: So but did somebody show you want to do?

Barnhart: Somebody would show you what to do, but after that why there wasn't any of them that was that difficult for me. There was only one machine that I refused to work on.

IA: What was that?

Barnhart: And that was a threading machine. And that was threading, well they were like cylinders and you put the threads on the outside of this machine and that scared me.

IA: It did?

Barnhart: Because I could see my fingers

IB: Fingers going through it? Oh dear.

Barnhart: That machine, I refused to work on.

IA: It was dangerous, you had to put your hands in some of the working parts?

Barnhart: No, but it is scary.

IA: Oh. Had other people been hurt on that machine?

Barnhart: Not that I know of, but I just had a fear of that machine.

IA: Sure.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 5

Barnhart: Of course, in my working there I had seen

IB: Accidents.

IA: Had you really?

Barnhart: Yeah.

IA: Were there a lot of women in the department with you?

Barnhart: Oh yes, most all of them were women. Because the men were gone.

IB: So you had a group of ladies that you worked with?

Barnhart: Most, well not all the time. When I was working on the machines, I worked with a lot of men. And in groups I would work with men.

IB: Sometimes with men, yeah.

IA: Can I just back up a second. I was just curious how you picked the Reo to work in, because obviously there was other war work going on in town?

Barnhart: Well to tell you the truth, why because my brother-in-law was the head of the personnel department.

IA: Your brother-in-law was the head of the personnel at Reo?

Barnhart: Right.

IA: What was his name?

Barnhart: Theodore Lamond.

IA: how do you spell that last name?

Barnhart: L a m o n d.

IA: Just like it sounds.

IB: And Lamond, so he was the head of personnel?

Barnhart: Right.

IB: So you figured you had an in. And you

Barnhart: Why he told me they were hiring down there, so I went down.

IB: Okay. And you didn't have any trouble getting in.

Frances Barnhart
3/9/93
Page 6

Barnhart: I didn't have any, I had to wait my turn, but which was 24 hours.

IA: Oh really, what did you have to go and sit in the personnel office?

Barnhart: No, I just went in in the morning and had my physical or it really wasn't 24 hours. They said can you come back at 4:00 and go to work.

IB: Wow. And they gave you a physical there?

Barnhart: Right.

IB: And the first day

Barnhart: Well most of it was there. And then you had to go downtown to the, I think it was Dr. DeVries office for part of it. But ah, most of it was done at the hospital.

IB: Ah huh.

Barnhart:

IB: Was he the company doctor, that Dr. DeVries?

Barnhart: I think so, yeah.

IB: And you were familiar with Reo already because you had gone

Barnhart: Oh yeah, but it was my first experience of ever being in a shop.

IB: In a shop at all?

Barnhart: Yeah. And that was a little bit scary.

IB: Do you remember how much you made when you first went in?

Barnhart: Yeah, 65 cents an hour.

IB: Okay. And

Barnhart: And after three months then you got 75 cents an hour.

IB: Ah huh and how much was that in comparison to what you were getting at Kresge when you left?

Barnhart: Ah,

IB: You don't remember exactly how much you got at Kresge huh.

Frances Barnhart
3/9/93
Page 7

Barnhart: Yes, \$18.50 a week.

IB: Oh okay, so I'd have two figure it out, okay.

IA: And that was for a 40 hour week at Kresges?

Barnhart: More than 40, we worked Saturdays.

IB: Oh is that right? Like Monday through Saturday.

Barnhart: Well towards the end they got or would give us a day off, you now, I think 48 hours. (can't hear) During the Depression we worked 54 hours a week for a lot less than that.

IB: I see. And you felt fortunate, actually probably that you had, had that job.

Barnhart: Very, very fortunate. Anybody that had a job during the Depression was very fortunate.

IB: Yeah. Now when you worked at Kresge were you married yet or were you still single?

Barnhart: .. we leave my personal life out of it.

IB: If you'd like.

Barnhart: Okay.

IB: Sure, no problem. The only reason I'm curious is that if you were helping to support a family or you were just on your own, but if you don't want to answer that it is fine.

Barnhart: You turn that off and I can tell you.

IB: Okay.

Barnhart: But I don't want, that is not for publication (Tape off.)

IA: Shirley and I are both very curious about um, what it was like for women to work in the shop in Reo during World War II. And we haven't found too many people like yourself who were there, so um, that's why Shirley was asking what it was like when you first entered there, how did you feel about the difference between working in a shop and working in a, you know, a place like Kresge. Um, what your relationships was like, what it was like how the men treated you when you walked in. Because obviously women weren't there before. So it was a new kind of a thing.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 8

Barnhart: Oh I never could say that ah, I was ever treated with disrespect.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: Because they had to depend on the women to do the work and so I um, well it is just like everything. Everything doesn't always go the way you want it to, but if I had anything to say they know about it and no because I'll tell you the truth it was harder working with women than it was..... don't make me out a Um, it was harder to work with the women than it was men, I think,

IA: With men? Because it was just business.

Barnhart: I was, they treated me with

IA: Ah huh, ah huh, that's good.

Barnhart: And many times I would be the only woman working with four or five men.

IA: Ah huh, and that wasn't ever a problem?

Barnhart: But I had to hold up my end of it.

IA: Right.

IB: You couldn't be asking for help, you needed

Barnhart: Oh no. If you couldn't do the job, you didn't, there was no favoritism as far as I was concerned.

IA: Did ah, were there times when some of the women just couldn't do it and were send out of the department or do you recall? Are most of the women that worked there were able to cut the mustard so-to-speak?

Barnhart: Most of them ah, from my viewpoint they were, there was enough work there that they could find something for somebody to do.

IA: To do.

Barnhart: Because if they couldn't do anything more than inspection work which was just sitting down and checking parts, why anybody could do that. Because they had the gauges and everything to work with and but now with me on the machines, why lots of times I had to do my own setup work and

IA: Oh you did.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 9

Barnhart: So, because it was something that I was interested in machines and having worked selling hardware and selling ah, tools, it was not foreign to me. When they talked about different kinds of tools, I knew what they were talking about.

IA: Did you have to go get your own stock to work on this machine?

Barnhart: No most of the time the stockmen brought the stock to the machine.

IA: So you just went in and your stock was there and you started in. You had a production figure every hour, did you?

Barnhart: Well toward the end, when I first started working there we worked ah as a day rate, hourly rate

IA: Oh.

Barnhart: and then they put in piece work.

IA: They did?

Barnhart: So every job was priced.

IA: Was that because you changed job or they just changed the way that they paid?

Barnhart: They changed the whole system.

IA: They changed the system.

Barnhart: To increase production they, that was my opinion anyway that by putting it on piece work they could get more production.

IA: Because obviously the more pieces you could turn out, the more you would make at the end of the week.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: And you could make more money that way if you worked harder too.

Barnhart: Right. But you hadn't dare make turn in too much or they'd cut the rates down.

IA: Oh. So did you discuss

Barnhart: No they set a time

IA: Efficiency expert.

Barnhart: Right.

Frances Barnhart
3/9/93
Page 10

IB: And nobody likes that do they?

Barnhart: They send somebody in and retime your job if they thought that you were goofing off too much. If you had too much time to spend at the restroom or too much time to visit or too much time away from the job, they knew it and they'd have somebody come in and retime your job for you. Because they figured if you had that much time, why you could

IA: Do you remember who you worked for, who your supervisor was?

Barnhart: Hum.

IA: Or the people that

Barnhart: I can't, I couldn't tell you.

IA: That's alright. I was just curious.

Barnhart: If I heard their names, why but to, um, I had some real good bosses and I had some ...

IA: You did.

Barnhart: But most as I say most of them were

IA: Did you have to wear a special protective clothing, did you wear a badge?

Barnhart: Oh yeah, we all had badges and ah, we all, all the women had to wear hair nets and ah, because I had at one point I was on the safety committee and that was part of my job. I didn't get anything extra or anything for it, but in every group they'd have someone appointed to watch out for the safety of other people and I would have to see that they kept or had their hair nets on.

IA: For the electricity the static electricity?

Barnhart: Right. And you could not wear gloves.

IA: Oh really?

Barnhart: Because, especially you could wear gloves if you were doing inspection work, but on the machines you could not wear gloves because I know from my own personal experience I was working on a job and I had gloves on and the glove got caught in the drill press and I

IB: Oh dear.

Frances Barnhart
3/9/93
Page 11

IA: And you had your hand cut.

Barnhart: Yeah, and ah, so ah, that's why you could not wear

IB: It is dangerous.

Barnhart: very dangerous because in just a split second why a drill going at that high rate of speed to catch a thread or anything on those gloves and chu, they'd be gone.

IA: How about jewelry, you had to take off your jewelry?

Barnhart: Oh you couldn't wear jewelry.

IA: Right. And ah, did you have to wear special things on your feet for the sparks?

Barnhart: No.

IA: Nothing on your feet. Okay, because I've seen

Barnhart: Everybody wore um, you couldn't wear a lot of loose clothing.

IA: Yeah, overalls or coveralls that kind of thing.

Barnhart: Yeah, slacks and blouses.

IA: That's when women started wearing slacks more.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: Wasn't that? Before that it was housedresses.

Barnhart: That's really done away with the housedresses.

IA: It was the beginning. Did you have to wear steel toed shoes or anything like that?

Barnhart: Ah not when I worked there, but I guess later. Of course, our work, the work in our department was not really that, they were mostly small pieces.

IA: So you didn't have to worry something big and heavy falling on your foot.

Barnhart: That's right. But I guess later on, they had to wear safety shoes and they and when I worked there, they didn't have to wear safety glasses, but I guess later they had to.

IA: Or any kind of ear protection, earplugs or anything for noise?

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 12

Barnhart: I never had anything, not that I know of.

IB: What about the union, did you have to join the union?

Barnhart: Oh yes. After three months, after three, I think it was three months you had to join the union. Which was good. ... that they ah, people today in spite of what the union is criticized for would not have what they have today if it were not for the unions.

IA: Were there any grievances or troubles or anything that you participated in with respect to the union or was it just simply a matter of paying your dues and

Barnhart: One time we went, they went on strike, but this was not during the war, this was after

IA: After the war.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: Was that the wildcat strike, there was one in '46 or '47? Was that the one?

Barnhart: Yeah, I think so.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: No it was um, after that.

IA: It was even after that, okay.

Barnhart: Well it was about, it was probably about '47.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: Yeah, because that was when I was working in the lawn mower department, after the war.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: But during the war we didn't have any.

IA: Any grievances or um, reasons to contact the union about anything that happened to you in the shop or anything like that?

Barnhart: ...

IA: Nothing like that.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 13

Barnhart: No any problems that I had all I had to do was go to the foreman, I could work it out.

IA: With the foreman? Not even the steward or the committee member or anything like that.

Barnhart: Right. Oh there were times when you would talk to them, but I never had. As I said any real serious problems, if I had anything to say ... to the boss

IA: What about the working conditions, did you have adequate place to have your lunch, bathroom facilities, what was just the, was it

Barnhart: Oh they had a big restroom.

IA: For women?

Barnhart: Oh yeah.

IA: Oh. Did they make that new for the women coming in for the war?

Barnhart: I think so because I remember them remodeling.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: No they had a place for women for restroom and a place for women to eat.

IA: Was it away from your work area?

Barnhart: Oh yes. Well it was yes it was on the second floor. We worked on the first floor. Well the second floor during the war was used for, that's where they assembled bomb fuses. I'm not familiar with that. I never worked up there.

IA: Were there women up there?

Barnhart: Oh yes.

IA: There were women, it was all women?

Barnhart: Ah huh, that's where my sister worked up there.

IB: Oh your sister worked up there.

Barnhart: Ah huh.

IA: The Navy Department in relationship to where it was in the building, would that have been say the Washington Baker area?

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 14

Barnhart: It was in the 6 and 700 block on, it was from Baker Street, that whole building. Well it was down to the where the old office building used to be. The first building there on facing Washington was the Navy Department. Those two buildings it was 6 and 700 building. Those were the Navy. And then later it was the lawn mower department.

IA: Oh the lawn mower department later went in to what had been the Navy Department.

Barnhart: Right.

IA: Oh.

Barnhart: We were on we were off for about a year.

IA: Oh.

Barnhart: And ah, then they started up the lawn mower department and ah, then most of us, well I guess anybody that worked in the Navy Department according to their seniority was called back to work and ah, I was one of them and worked in the lawn mower department until they sold it to the Motor Wheel.

IA: Motor Wheel. Um,

IB: Can I just ask one thing Motor Wheel. Um, I'm curious about the ages of the women who worked during the war. Because the only people that we've talked to were um, very young, in their teens.

Barnhart: Most of them, we had a few of oh it was a very few of ah, older women that had worked at the Reo before the war and then for a period of time they did not work and then, of course, starting when the Navy Department started up, why they called them

IA: They didn't work during the Depression?

Barnhart: They didn't.

IA: They did, they were out during the Depression? Is that what you are saying?

Barnhart: Well like most men or women that worked during the Depression if they got one or two days a week, why they were

IA: I see and then they got called back.

Barnhart: Yeah.

IA: When the production started.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 15

Barnhart: Yeah.

IA: Um, in different types of things probably. Because a lot of the women in Reo before were in upholstery and wiring and

Barnhart: Yeah. But they were um, some of them were working on machines and some of them were working on There wasn't too many though. Most of them were, well let's see Well I was in my forties

IA: Oh I would have guessed a lot younger than that. Okay.

Barnhart: I'm 84 now.

IA: You surprise me.

IB: We didn't expect that.

IA: Oh my goodness.

IB: I thought she was going to say ...

IA: Yeah, (laughter)

IB: I was thinking someplace along the late 60s or ... Oh my goodness.

IA: During the war did they have, do you remember bond drive, war bond drives? Did they come through the factory

Barnhart: They had bond drives, but I don't remember too much about them.

IA: I was just wondering if they just automatically expected you and deduced the bond from your

Barnhart: Oh yeah, we all bought, or to my knowledge at least, I did and I think most everybody did had bond deductions from their paycheck.

IA: Like one a month or some such thing?

Barnhart: Yeah, so much every payday was taken out

IA: Oh okay.

Barnhart: for bonds. And that was just automatic and then when you get a bond paid for why they'd send it to you. That's a good thing for a lot of people, I know for me that was a good way to save money, which I was very grateful for when they, the war was over and even after they, after I left (can't hear) because the bonds that I had that is what helped build this house. It ah, helped

Frances Barnhart
3/9/93
Page 16

with another project. Of course, the best thing that ever happened to me at the Reo was because I met my husband there.

IA: Oh he worked there too.

Barnhart: Yeah.

IA: What did he do there?

Barnhart: Well he was on inspection and during the war he was on tool ... inspection and then when they started the lawn mower department, why he decided that he could make more money working on the machines, so he went to machine work. He could do anything he wanted to do anyway. And ah, then after they closed up the lawn mower department he worked in the truck division on inspection until he retired. But we were both working in the Navy Department when we first met, but it was just a casual like, casual passing and ah, but we really didn't get to know each other until we started working in the lawn mower department.

IA: After the war?

Barnhart: After the war, yeah.

IA: I'm curious, you mentioned being off after the war about a year. There was no compensation, you didn't get any kind of layoff benefits?

Barnhart: Oh yeah, I got, you got unemployment.

IA: That's

Barnhart:

IB:

Barnhart: Yeah, all that time.

IA: And you, you wanted to go back to Reo, they had a spot for you?

Barnhart: Oh sure, because that's where the money was.

IA: Ah huh. Did you want to go back to what you were doing before?

Barnhart: It didn't make any difference.

IA: It didn't matter to you.

Barnhart: When I went back why, of course, they put me on machinery in the lawn mower department, I was put back on machines for work and

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 17

then I got ah, then I went, when I left there, why or when they sold it, why I was working on the line. But I preferred machines.

IA: On the assembly line?

Barnhart: Yeah, oh I didn't mind it on the assembly line.

IA: Ah huh, assembly line for trucks?

Barnhart: Lawn mowers.

IA: For lawn mower. Did your pay change when you came back after the war?

Barnhart: Oh yeah. Ah, of course, (can't hear) piece work,

IA: Ah huh.

Barnhart: Well a lot of it during the war was group work, you worked in a group and that was whatever the group, every job was priced and it was ah, your day's work was turned in as a group. Because I used to for our group on the, when I worked on the ah, ground sharp machines why I had to make out (loud buzz) time sheets for the whole group or whatever that group would, the production that they would do was all turned in and we all got paid the same.

IA: Oh.

Barnhart: Now like some jobs were paid more. It was easier to make your money on some jobs than it was others. So those were the jobs that we would push to make up for the whole thing. So it all

IA: The ones that paid more, did that mean that the more production had to be put out during that particular job?

Barnhart: Not necessarily.

IA: Or they were harder to do, the more complicated stuff?

Barnhart: Just the way they were rated.

IA: Just the way that someone had rated them in terms of their importance or... Were there ever times when people wouldn't cooperate, so that everybody could do, you know, where people in a group didn't work together, so that you could all make a basic wage.

Barnhart: Oh Well for the most part, they all, there was always some that were among the slow, but

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 18

IA: Ah huh.

Barnhart: They ah,

IA: You got them to two the line?

Barnhart: Most days if they were held back

IA: Oh okay.

Barnhart: And I imagine that I know an awful lot of them that
(loud buzz)

IA: Were you living, oh you weren't living here when you worked during the war.

Barnhart: No.

IA: Were you living in the area or somewhere near the Reo?

Barnhart: No, my sister and I had an apartment north

IA: Oh so then you took a bus.

Barnhart: Ah huh.

IA: Downtown and transfer?

Barnhart: Right.

IA: Oh I know, I wanted to ask you what kind of shifts you worked too? Did you, the same shift all the time, 9 to 5 or whatever?

Barnhart: No. I had, I worked, when I first started working there, I worked from, I worked from 4 to 12.

IA: Four in the afternoon until midnight.

Barnhart: Ah huh.

IA: That was called afternoons?

Barnhart: Right. And ah, then then they started um, the three, of course, they had the three shifts going, then they started alternating. I didn't like that. I would much rather have the 4 to 12 shift than

IA: All the time.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 19

Barnhart: Than ... because you just working the three shifts, you would work 30 days I think on each shift, but you just get used to one shift and then you go back to the other and it was awful.

IA: A hard way to organize your life that way.

IB: Was it hard to learn to, you'd just get your sleep pattern if you worked 4 to midnight, you'd come home and then sleep until sometime in the morning. And then you'd have to shift your body rhythm all around when you worked.

Barnhart: It was the worse shift was 12 to 8.

IA: Why was it the worst, hard to stay awake or

Barnhart: Because you couldn't get any sleep during the day.

IA: Everybody else in your neighborhood was up and around and people were making noise.

Barnhart: Right. At that time, why there was oh well myself and three sisters were living together in a house and ah, of course, they all worked days. And then when ah I tried to get sleep during the day, you couldn't and in the evening they were home, you couldn't. That midnight shift was As far as I was concerned.

IA: How long did you work at Reo in lawn mower department?

Barnhart: Well I worked at the Reo from 1942 until 1953 when they sold it.

IA: Oh okay. After they sold the to Motor Wheel, that was when you stopped working there.

Barnhart: Ah huh.

IA: Did you stop working there just because you didn't want to, you wanted to continue doing that kind of work and they were no longer doing it anymore or

Barnhart: Well we um, at that time we were um, in 1953..... for a while and my husband because we were building, we started building this house and ... was more valuable working on this house than it was working. Of course, there wasn't anything over there to do anyway and I think it wasn't until about 1959 or '60, they called me back over there to work but

IA: At the Reo?

Barnhart: Ah huh. But I didn't go back.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 20

IA: What would they have wanted you to do, did they

Barnhart: I haven't any idea.

IA: They obviously thought you were a good worker to call back after all those years.

Barnhart: Well at that time my husband and I we had started a ceramic business and so I could have made a lot more money if I'd went back to work at Reo, but um, we, it was something that we enjoyed and

IB: I remember Vandervorts, it was a nice big store downtown, sporting goods and

Barnhart: Yeah, well I worked there for a while, the one on north Washington. Yeah. But ah, when he started building this house, why that took up all of our time, extra time (can't hear) because we did most of this ourselves. Though we had ... we had the house framed in, the basement, oh but then after that why we ... all the rest of the work and got the plastering and we had to hire that done but my husband ...

IA: Wow.

Barnhart: This has got all hardwood floors and I know what it is to put in hardwood floors, because I did most of it.

IA: You've always worked hard, haven't you?

Barnhart: Yes I have. (laughter)

IB: Um, after the war you were off, there were strikes and there was changeover of the type of things they were making, um, and you left in '53. And they had a military contract then didn't they, the army trucks and such. So work was up.

Barnhart: There wasn't a lot of work for that many women, even though I was pretty high on the seniority list.

IB: A lot of the men had come back from the war

Barnhart: ... the men had ah, priority, anyone that was in the service, why they had priority and most of those jobs were for men anyway. I can't say what went on after that, because I never went back to work. So I don't know. I know a lot of women wiring jobs and things like that. I have no idea what they did.

Frances Barnhart

3/9/93

Page 21

IA: But I guess that year a lot of things changed the year that they laid people off after the war. Yeah. They had to reorganize everything again.

IB: The country was going through some big strike periods too. ... strike

IA: Yeah.

Barnhart: We were off just about a year.

IA: Just about a year.

Barnhart: But we didn't of course at that time one sister and I were had an apartment together and ah so we enjoyed our leisure time.

IA: I'm kind of jumping way ahead, but the question has occurred to me, since you were living here at the very end when the Reo buildings burned, could you see the fire from here?

Barnhart: Oh yes. They ah, I went down there when ah, at the time that they burned, I was ah, oh I hope this is not all on tape.

IA: Would you rather this be off?

IB: Would you like us to just shut it off?

Barnhart: Yeah.

IA: Okay.

Barnhart: Because this don't, this don't (tape off).