

## Transcript of a Recorded Interview with Anna Kadlec, 19 Jun 1978

Interviewer: Libby Fraas  
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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed conversation. The reader, therefore, should bear in mind that he is reading a text of the spoken rather than the written word.

[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1]

LF: The following is an unrehearsed interview with Ann Kadlec by Libby Fraas for the Kentucky oral history commission. The interview was conducted at Mrs. Kadlec's home on Long View Drive in Richmond Kentucky on June 19th 1978 at approximately 10 o'clock in the morning.

[Beginning of interview inaudible]

AK: To the uh, packing house, to all the packing houses and, um, observed the working conditions and so on. The sanitary conditions and how the women were being hired. I was familiar with the, I had attended the union meetings and so on at the university of Chicago settlement and at Hull House too. During this time we had in Chicago what was called the [unintelligible] it was really the beginning of employers and employees getting together. What do you call it? The conferences &

LF: The mediations?

AK: Well I'll think of it, I'll think of it. This one I attended these court hearings, um, there was J. Argdonarmer on the stand one morning, um, he was being questioned about varied working conditions, the wages and so forth. Cutahee, several of the others, then one morning they had W.B. Farris, Mr. W.B. Farris who was the general superintendent of all the plants that they had, there were eight plants out of town too besides Chicago, you see. And he was being questioned very very thoroughly and I felt so badly for him because I had been there the day before seeing women on the killing floors, you had women who did the, who did the killing of the big beef, cattle and so on. And he couldn't answer any of the questions because he was the man who was in the top office you know and probably seldom got in to the plant. That night whatever possessed me, I don't know but I remember getting up after midnight and writing him a very short note asking him if he'd be interested in having a woman hire women so that the women could be put in their proper places. From what I & I didn't say this in the, in the letter but um, this is what I meant and, uh, I was & felt that perhaps I'd never hear from him, you know he was, to me he was a big man that, who would not be interested in a & some & a woman, another social worker perhaps he'd think. Well the next morning I went to Wilson and company and I was quite & um, quite familiar with & not familiar but the superintendent of Wilson and company and I were pretty good friends and he was always kind and taking me to any of the departments I wanted to see and

escorting me around and I told him, Mr. Frazee was his name, and uh, I told him what I had done and I think he laughed for a half an hour.

LF: [Laughs]

AK: He said you, uh, I don't know & but he used to call me Ms. Sunshine, he said you wrote to W.B. Farris? He's the toughest man in the entire packing house industry. He said I worked for him for seventeen years but I will tell you this, he is honest. And he'll give you all the rope you want, he'll work you. Well of course with that introduction I was sure that I'd never hear from him, but I think the second day I came home and I had a telegram from mister Farris to come for an interview, And I went, and I tell you I was & I had never been in their general offices the big offices you know and I walked in to this great big room and evidently there must have been a kind of an alert, you know because the stenographers all looked and so on, and uh & toward me came a short man, red headed man and he looked as Irish as could be, you know, you could tell. And I told him who I was, he probably surmised it and uh, he said well Mister Farris had been subpoenaed again to the court he said I'm to interview you I don't know what possessed me I looked at him and I said Oh but I came & I was naïve you know, I said Oh no I to see Mr. Farris, Mr. Farris sent me the wire He said But I'm his assistant and I just shook my head I said Will he be here tomorrow? I remember innocently you know, he said Yes and so I said well I'll come back tomorrow and you know about six months later we were on very good terms afterward he said to me You know I help hire you because of your spunk you didn't want to be interviewed by me. Uh I met mister Farris then, the next day took me into his private office & am I going in to too much detail?

LF: No

AK: Took me in to his private office just like Dr. Thompson he swung back and forth and kind of looked me over you know and he asked me what I was doing and I was very honest. I said I'm making a survey of working women in the packing industry I've been interviewing them in their homes and now I'm going through various packing houses observing working conditions and so on. And uh & he didn't seem a bit alarmed or anything about it and he said now what would you expect to do? and I said Well I don't know I'd have to be there for several weeks to observe & I have sense enough to know that you can't do everything at once I'd have to observe in your own, in your own plant what is & what could be done and so forth Well we talked a while and finally he said well when can you come? and I said Well, I'm afraid I couldn't come for another six weeks until I finished writing up the survey you know. And you know miss that could have given me a PhD, I know it could have. Well in the mean time too both Mary Jane Adams and Mary McDowell had written to Brinmar and I had a scholarship to go to Brinmar but I never & never took advantage of it because I was getting more out of experience that even a school couldn't have given me. Uh & as I say I told them that I couldn't come for that period and so on and then he asked me what salary I would expect of course this came out of the clear sky you know, I'd never been salary conscious. I loved always, what I'd loved & doing what I'd always done you know so that money doesn't mean much to me, it's just a necessary evil at times isn't it? I did suddenly remember what teachers were getting and my fellowship was paying just as much a

beginning teacher would have been paid, I think it was sixty dollars a month. And I don't know what possessed me but I doubled it. Thinking and feeling sure you know subconsciously that I'd come down to want I was really getting and Mr. Farris didn't blink an eye, it was all right & it was perfectly all right. Well Anyway uh to shorten it I & you see I didn't even tell Jane Adams or Mary McDowell she was the first one because I was close, uh, the packing plant was close to the settlement and I'd told her what I had done and she was just shocked, just shocked and I said & it didn't occur to me to tell her at first you know until after this interview and she said she always called & she had, her name was Mary and her sisters name was Annie so she's always called me Annie, she said Annie we've been trying to get somebody in there for twenty years do you suppose you could do anything on such short notice? Do you suppose & Oh you can look at the future you have before you now, what you're already doing in surveys and so forth and she called Jane Adams and both of them talked to me and I was & I just felt well here's a challenge, here's really a challenge you know, and so I said please let me try, please let me try and they both cried, they really cried and said finally we've gotten someone who could probably & because of my languages and then interpret & you see even your social workers like that haven't had the & they've come from families where they were sheltered, you might say both of them you know came from wealthy families, and if you've come from the bottom you know what life is all about. Well anyway I & I stuck to my decision and when I & finished the survey and you know two or three years later by accident I came & when I was traveling, I came... I was in a New York library where I had quotes from my, both the women used all this information for writing up their & their uh, opinions you might say or & so... I went, I reported to Mr. Farris and they gave me an office where I could come back you know, and I said for several weeks I wouldn't be able to do any hiring I had to see the plant, survey the plant and make an examination. And they assigned me Mr. & the fire chief and I went into & I wore a uniform like the packing house men wear, and when I was in college we used to wear & we used to wear uh & boys fedora hats, sort of you know & I had a man's hat on and so on. And uh the men... the, the foreman and the superintendants began to know why I was there and I had a very nice report with them I had no trouble. You know they, they & I was really accepted, of course there was this alarm at first you know and very often go through the first few weeks very often on my own and I'd notice certain kind of a working condition or maybe a certain kind of a process. Common sense could tell you that it could be done better, you know. And I'd often mention it to the & to the foreman [unintelligible] and in a nice way I'd say come here, don't you think this could be done & What do you say? You see, and you know invariably to they say But Miss. Ke & they called me Kentucky too or Kotecky or, or & and I'd say Sunshine became my & their favorite name, I reported that before, yes I'd say alright so in poor English I'd write it out and I'd have the man copy it just the way I'd written it, poor English and I'd say Now you send it to your next boss maybe if it was a foreman send it to your superintendant and you see they got wise, they got wise and of course the men got the credit for it, that exactly what I wanted so there would be this nice relationship and of course it meant a lot to the man to be recognized you know. Well at the end of about six weeks I began... I opened the office & and you see there was nothing you could go by, when a woman was hired all they had was name, and address, and maybe her number, what department she was in and she was put on the payroll. There was no family history or anything and in the mean time I worked day and night, day and night in & making out forms so that you have & also at this, at the & at Hull house, I don't know

whether you've ever heard of Edith and Grace Abbot? They were & they became part of the &the child labor &uh &people in washing D.C. I think it was grace that gave a course in philanthropy at Hull House and I took that course & can't tell you what I got & I came across some little notes that were here and there that I'd had down in the basement somehow, I don't know how, I resurrected some of it when I moved, you know and I worked out forms for employment & employing and of course I was overwhelmed, overwhelmed with the women coming in the morning and in the afternoon and I use to work 18-20 hours, I don't know when I got any sleep. I was looking for assistance, I needed assistance right away. I inquired &er & I got... you see sociology was really & quite a new, new subject at that time when, in the 1914 s, 15 s, 16, when I went to college. And I got couple of women from the University of Chicago that had masters degrees probably not in sociology but something that would be related to labor. They'd come for a day or two and they couldn't take it, they couldn't take to odor of the stock yards, which wasn't always bad to me I & afterward when I traveled I use to always send a telegram and say I'm homesick for Swiss fertilizers perfume to my nostrils. Well & uh then I had a couple of women from north western, one was a PhD, lasted about three days, couldn't take it when I took them to the plant you know, and so on, they couldn't take the environment, they couldn't take the pressure that was on. We had a very fine & this was Morris company incidentally that was the name, was one of the biggest packers. Uh & We had a very fine, I will say, medical department. We had two doctors we had a dentist and two very fine nurses and one of them was Irene Thulis, T-H-U-L-I-S, she has been, in the 19 & when war broke out in 1914 and so on she was a red cross &a nurse in France and had come back and she was in the packing industry, and one day she said to me Ann, I think I have the right person for you; my sister Stella, she's just a high school graduate. Now the Thulis were the lace-curtain Irish I'll call them. Mr. Thulis had a, quite a large meat market on the south side of Chicago, not too far from the packing house and was just about a mile from where I went to high school at the time. There were thirteen in the family, Stella was, oh I guess about the fourth, and they were all well educated, they were lawyers, teachers, and so on. Mr. Thulis came from the same county in Ireland as Mr. Swift, the old man Harold Swift, and Harold Swift wanted Mr. Thulis to go into the packing industry when he came to this country, and Thulis wouldn't go, never did, but he was his consultant you might say or so on, and they told later that Mr. Thulis could go down, could go down in to the, among the cattle you know survey them and he could tell to them, to a millionth of a cent what each part of the carcass would bring. They & you see they were both cattle men from the old country. Well Stella came she was twelve years older than I was, a beautiful woman, the &I was & I weighed more than I weigh now [unintelligible] she was taller, she was very much like Ms. McDowell, a tall woman, not fat but heavy, a beautiful face, smile, dimpled it chuckled(?) and we worked it out, we made the best team under the sun. She & um & would do the hiring and by the way, by that time, by the time she was hired at the end of about six months I had to have, I had two stenographers, there called secretaries now. We had two secretaries sometimes a third one because there was so much to take care of you know and I had an immense office it was probably the size of almost this whole house you know [unintelligible] cause you get these women and we have to..we interviewed them you know and so on. You could pretty well tell where a woman would, would fit in and with Stella hired I hired, I always made sure that I got to see the woman and talk to her and afterward follow every one of the up maybe we'd hire a hundred a day. And so you see it took all day and all night some times to follow them up go to the department & And I

can't remember names now, I can't even spell it a times I get so provoked because I was always a good speller & But whether it was Mrs. Lucashevsky or Narvarkavitzs or whoever it was I'd remember their names, and I'd remember just exactly where they were pigeonholed. No woman, after she was hired could be fired; it had to come through our offices so that we'd know the reasons. You see that was so important, maybe we didn't put the person in the right & maybe the boss was prejudice, maybe they & these were all these things. Well, to shorten it all, eventually our office became like a court house. We'd have a hearing between the foreman, or whoever it was you know and with the woman. Not only that but if I had time I'd hear all their woes. The women would come ContReganting(?) knowing their languages you know, I'd learn all about their family lives, all about their marital relations and so on. Within six, a little over six months we had things & not entirely in hand, but well enough so that I could be sent out you know. I went to the ... my first outside trip was to the second & I'm sure it was the second national safety first council meeting in St. Louis Missouri and I stayed at the Stapler(?) hotel, nothing [unintelligible]. I went with our safety engineer whom we had so that he and I use to cooperate you know, but I'd see things that he probably & I'd see things from a woman's standpoint which he didn't. For instance the sanitary. I couldn't begin to tell you about sanitary conditions; we had the blacks and whites and they were separated they were separated &

LF: How many?

AK: & eating, at that time, uh & maybe you'd have three toilets for a hundred women Uh & the, the, uh & places where they ate were terrible. Within a year no matter what I asked for I got, whether it was a thousand dollar improvement or ten thousand dollar be & it went in a hurry Things were where the & you had women in the glue houses, in the glue house where they had uh & uh & where they cleaned this, the & the hairs off the animals you know and so on that was all made in to glue and some part of the bones. Well you didn't have, you had all of the black women there & uh & where there were no windows, I can't begin to tell you how awful some of the things were. But anyway I went to this safety first council meeting and I was the only woman, I don't know several hundred men, they were, it was national you know, and I was asked to give talks of what a woman was doing in industry and so forth. And I was treated royally you can imagine one woman you know and so on it was really interesting, and talking to them and I learned so much, I learned so much from them and I think about the third day I came back to the hotel and in the bath tub was a doz & this was some time in November & was a dozen chrysanthemums. See it was football time too and college and so on when the kids use to have chrysanthemums they were as big as cabbages they didn't have any vase to put them in they were in the bath tub &

LF: [laughs]

AK: and with them came a telegram Congratulations to one of our Morris men and I had, my salary was doubled. Well you can imagine how I felt. Well after that, that within a year I was sent... Oh, in the mean time Mr. Farris asked for suggestions and I suggested That uh & now these things are even coming back to me now that I had way back in my memory you know. What can we do and I suggested that we have a foreman meetings at certain times you know during the day to acquaint them with what I was trying to do and what we were trying to do for them and so that

we d all have cooperation and I was the secretary and I suggested that they serve coffee and something and you know &uh & uh & one of the nurses mothers was the cook, she baked for the office help they had a lovely restaurant for the office help. And she baked the most wonderful, wonderful pies I ve never tasted any that was [unintelligible] and I suggested out of the clear sky you know, I wouldn t have nerve enough to do the things I did you know just nonchalantly serve coffee and &and & oh dear &[unintelligible] it will come to me &pie and you know we developed the nicest relationship, when I went back to tell Mary McDowell about that she said I can t believe this I cant believe this and she still thought but really they help and you know &

LF: Served the coffee at the foreman s meeting and then at the &?

AK: At the foreman s meeting yes, yes &at the & you know, and it did, it did so much for the top men to become acquainted with these men who really worked hard and were sincere you know it really cleared up a lot of otherwise would have been problems. Then within a year & oh, during that time if there were any conferences, social worker conferences maybe a day or two or so I could go to any of them I remember this was the beginning of NEA. Whether it was educational whether it was industrial, whether it was social workers I was, if I mentioned I might learn something &go ahead and my expense account... nothing would stop me. Entertain anybody you want I was there for ideas you know bringing them back. Well by the end really I, I & It was just a marvelous, fantastic experiences uh I then I was &oh yeas then intermittently I was sent to the other plant to give suggestions, my first one was in East St. Louis and Ill never forget & I hadn t met, I hadn t met some of the superintendents from the other plants up to that time and I remember being [unintelligible] travel of course by train and being met and of course I knew what would probably happen, a young woman coming & thank goodness for my gray hair and meeting them you know and they expected probably criticism and so on and I tried to put them, & I don t know how I did it but tried to put them at ease & I was there to help if I could you know if there were any suggestions to be made, and really I was always met nicely. And [unintelligible] within the next year I did the same thing as a matter of fact then we put a woman in charge there, it was a smaller plant. Then I went, we had East St. Louise, uh, St. Jo Missouri, Kansas City Missouri, Kansas City Kansas across the river, Oklahoma City, New Orleans, Omaha Nebraska, Ney York.

LF: These are where Morris Company had the packing plants?

AK: Yeah these were all Morris Company plants, all Morris Company plants. And we did have, we did have in several &I came across some letters, I got them by accident In boxes and you know when I moved and with many of the things I bought by car and so on. But Uh & It was a nice relationship you see I was the only woman then with about fifty men, the only woman with fifty men the various superintendents and they, and if there was an emergency I could, I d dr & I was sent to these places and as I said any convention I &

LF: This is side two tape one of an interview with Anne Kadlec.

AK: Uh & Lets see I was there one year, I went to a social workers conference in Philadelphia with Jane Adams and Mary McDowell they wanted me to talk to the groups of what I was doing

in industry, by that time they were reconciled, they were reconciled see we were going to & cause even the union men were &were delighted you know and it did effect the other plant, the other plants didn t have, have any, didn t have women but they seemed to learn from the &uh & this is what happened too I was on a council they formed a council of the vari & the superintendents of the various plants and the community people that were interested, the ministers of the various churches became involved in all this and other social workers, the united charities it all, it all began to evolve around this &this sudden emergence of health and the...the you know. I went with them it was a few days before the forth of July &

LF: Do you remember the year?

AK: Yes, 1918. Uh, we &uh were staying at a woman s hotel which was just about a block away from independence hall and on the morning of the forth of July I got up early and you see, we for the ceremony and you d be surprised on the forth of July there wasn t much in front of independence hall there were just very few people they shot off, I don t know how many the, the canon you know and so forth. Well we did meet at one of the assembly halls there and I gave a talk on &and well in the mean time, when I had time I still worked at the settlement maybe if I had Sunday night off I use to & uh & to uh, supervise Sunday night dances for the teenagers from seven to nine at the settlement, we had a lovely hall, a lovely assembly hall, so that I was in contact with the young people you see and so on. Uh & from there I went to Atlantic city, there was a national &social workers conference in Atlantic city, and Atlantic city was being you know revived now had this mile long pier and I was there at the & I gave a short talk on what the settlement was like, what we were doing at the settlement and the things that I was doing in industry. It was close to noon time but I was through and they had a nurse that, ah & from somewhere I ve forgotten where, who was giving a talk on health and so forth, and believe it or not she was quite heavy and her name was Ms. Featherweight, you know that sounds crazy in a way doesn't it? But her name was Featherweight and I was so interested in what she was saying and watching her vaguely (?) something happened and I got up to ask a question and I called her Ms. Heavyweight. And of course the audience went crazy it was written up in the &vaud(?) of the preceding you know afterward, but you know, that was one of the most interesting thing that ever happened to me. Of course they came to my hotel people began to & uh & want to know who the one said heavyweight, and she was very sweet she said don t be embarrassed it isn t the first time I was called that . Well as a result of that, I don t know how many offers I had of working in social work in, in other cities and so forth, but the nicest invitation came from Abigail Coolidge; who was the head of the settlement in Boston. Then there was another one, I went to Hudson House in New York One of the head &the, uh &New York settlement house wanted me to come and so, so I wired my boss: If there s not objection may I visit these places. In Boston Abigail was the cousin of that Governor Calvin Coolidge. I stayed at the...the & her settlement house, uh, the next day I was invited to the Coolidge farm and the Calvin and John Coolidge took me on an all day tour of Lexington, Boston, all of the home of the poets the various poets and so on, it was just fantastic. Well I learned & and I had afternoon tea with the Coolidges before I came back to the Boston, that was just a short drive.

JF: What was Calvin Coolidge like, do you recall?

AK: Very quiet, and Mrs. Coolidge was just a delight, and he wasn't very talkative, we sat on their front porch you know and so on. And they were very much interested you know of the young woman in ah..in an entirely new field and so on, and the boys were a delight, was just one horse shay you know with the fringe on top and so it & it was just wonderful. Well, In the mean time I discovered that there was trouble & uh & labor trouble in New Hampshire & [Background distractions]

Well anyway I went uh & then from there I went to New Hampshire and I uh & they were having labor trouble and found out what they were doing, and I came back with more ideas for our restaurant for & we were beginning to improve and the uh & feeding the people you know. I came back with the idea which they having here to scratch & whatever you would call it where you put your food &

JF: Assembly line?

AK: uh huh, yes assembly line, we installed that in our & in out plant. So there was always something new to bring back you know which made improvements [unintelligible] but as I say I was. I went to the uh & automobile industry when I was & GM, General Motors, any, any industry that had a conference I'd go to we & social workers, as I say I can & NEA, education conferences, and of course we had all sorts of conferences in our community and so on, so that it was really a fascinating experience.

JF: The uh, your interest in the packing plant and conditions there, was this started all by Sinclair Wilson's book The Jungle &

AK: Yes.

JF: When did it appear and what kind of impact did it have?

AK: Well you know when that appeared it was even taken off the market I think & I don't know if they still have & I'll have to go to the library to find out what it was & what it said because it had a terrible, it had a terrible influence on me, but you know uh & when I came & being there, you know there are always two sides to & to uh, industry and the people there really are you have to sympathies with the uh & with the employer too. what he has, after all they're there for profit. And they don't always mean to be & you take Mr. Farris and J. Arg & Oh, I became acquainted with uh & uh & Sunny Valentine, who was the cousin of J & of Argdonomer, the Argdonomer's. She was interested in the & in the uh & girls in the offices, she was the & She was a millionaire the Valentines were millionaires, and we became very, very close friends. She was working in the office not the conditions exactly but uh, social this sort of & Oh I oughta tell you this because this, this is uh, interesting, uh the, we had so many of the foreign uh & born people you know the young girls especially the Polish and so on, and some of the German, ah & we began to have & there were limited socially or I mean culturally, and I had, we formed a club at the settlement, the white girls formed a club at the settlement and you had university of Chicago women come and give concerts and so on. Really the settlement had such a cultural influence on these people; you had some of the best entertainment that was possible from the university and so on. And uh, uh

then, uh Stella and I got a brilliant idea of having uh, a beach party some of these girls that lived back in the yards believe it or not, there was a street car that within three miles could take them to the lake and some of them had not even seen lake Michigan and Chicago. So we had one, we got a carload and really, anything I asked for I got, I suggested that we got one of the trucks take the girls those that ll sign up. Uh, I said now this ll have to be a little on the quiet I think we took the Budarian (?) girls the first time, and uh, Mr. Farris said well what do you want? I said well & hotdogs, buns, coffee & and they did, they had a & a group make special hotdogs for that party, the buns from a bakery somewhere, big tanks of coffee & anything you wanted would be supplied(?). Then they got wind of it the other, the other uh & employees got wind of it and I was permitted, with a big beach uh, on the south side of Chicago, close to South Chicago you might say, and they were to sign up and I thought maybe fifty or so would come, you won t believe this: about three hundred. They had to get the, the trucks out, they had to put a night force on to make hotdogs, and it did come through, it did, it was all & it was wonderful. Well, then the black, the colored girls said Mrs. & Miss. Ken, Kentucky, they called me Miss. Kentucky, Couldn t we have the & oh and the girls often at, at intervals we & I d have them come to the settlement and they d hear concerts and so forth you know, we had some fine singer from the choruses from the university. The colored girls came can t we have something? I said well of course you can and this was the beginning when the first, the uh new b & uh colored, I m keeping saying black now because you see, the new Y.W.C.A. was formed on Michigan, on Indiana avenue was an old beautiful residence. I wondered what I could & uh prepare for them at the, you know, and I asked, I knew Irene Goins who was one of the women and she suggested, well we sent somebody out to sing and so forth. I got there and I was the one that was entertained, they were dressed lovely, they were dressed very, very colorfully, not as mod & not as, uh & err & like your & black people now in & same styles as we were an so on, but one of the women that worked in the glue house, which by that time was improved and so on, played the violin, another one played the piano and they entertained me, it was like & and their voices you know they sang beautifully.

JF: This is a black Y.W &?

AK: Yes

JF: Y.W.C.A.

AK: Yes, yes, then a few months later the, uh The Y.M.C.A. opened up, a Mr. Jackson was the head of that. Uh, the colored men & the, the Negro men came to me; one of them was an assistant foreman [inaudible] was his name and he said Miss. Kentucky what s the matter with us men? I said Well what would you like to do? He said May we use your office, a few of use, we like to sing. May we come and practice in your office and maybe they started out with ten men, there was no piano, I said we have no piano we don t need one right now and I said well let me think about it and Trevor & you know when I asked for, wanted a..asked for something I d stay awake at nights making excuses you know writing out the reasons for it and invariably I didn t have to make any to go, go ahead if that s what you thinks it s alright you know. But again I thought well we aught to have had a, this immense office you know, a piano. So I went modestly to Mr. Farris and he said [unintelligible] Now what is it and I began explaining to him, he said

well go out and find a piano & yes & a secondhand one you know, I said we don't need anything new or expensive you know. Well the men, they probably had just half hour for lunch, they'd gobble it up and they'd and they'd practice for fifteen minutes or so. That developed, then it became & they became so interested that they & uh & uh & began rehearsing after they'd & it grew and grew and they uh & uh & met in one of their churches on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, was a Methodist church. That developed into a one thousand membership chorus that year after year won the uh music contest in, in the Grant, the Grant Park Stadium, and the nucleus, the embryo uh started in our, in my office.

JF: What kind of songs did they sing?

AK: Well they did spirituals and then of course they got a fine leader you know and they have all these lovely, lovely & err programs, I wish I had so & oh I don't know rather I resurrected any of those, but it was, it was a & and they always gave credit and I'd be invited if there was anything special I'd be invited to their concerts and so on. And most of the time I was the only white person there was never any fear, I'd & uh & the white & this was in an entirely black section of Chicago on State Street, State Indiana, solidly black, and really & um & uh & slummy. You know, a slummy neighborhood, they would put me on the street car, they'd escort me to the street car, see that I got there perfectly, and I was never afraid, in those days you were never afraid. And you know years afterward my husband died very suddenly and I was alone, I'd go to concerts downtown and I remember having to transfer, I never drove in the night, maybe I'd be coming home at midnight or one o'clock in the morning and I use to transfer at fifty-ninth and Wentworth which was solidly black and on the corner where I'd get the street car going home was a saloon, a black saloon. The men got to know me, transferring so often they'd come out and wait for me until the street car came I was always protected by them, so I've always had a sympathetic & uh & sympathetic & uh & I could tell you the tragic parts & uh you know mayor daily lived back of the yards up till the time he & right up till the time of his death it was section called Bridgeport, which was right back of the yards. You had, in that community, I don't know [unintelligible] the Regan Colts, they were called the Regan Colts, they were vandals, they were the & they & they, they were a terrible group of young teenagers. In front of my office they & they, my office was an entrance to the Morris Company and to Swifton company, and when the people, the first group for instance at four o'clock was dismissed getting on streetcars, these Regan colts so often would come with clubs and & uh & ah & beat up the colored people before your eyes and the police & don't record this it's terrible & uh & well you can for your own sake, would beat them up and the police did very little. And in my estimation we could not have won the war without the black people at that time the stockyards were providing. Uh & another interesting episode & uh & for several weeks there was a little black woman; negro woman that came into the office, she was arthritic, there's no question in my mind about it, quit bent and she begged for work and Stella and I would look and I'd say, and I'd be gentle but I'd say I don't know where we could put you I need the work, I got to work, I want to work here, I want to work here. It was a hard time getting rid of her, you'd just & she'd sit I must work here, so I said to Stella well let's see what I can do, what we can do I said I'll look to it. Now the janitors, couple of janitors would come right after the women would leave each time you know and clean up, I said you know what Stella, we need a janitor's right here, somebody to stay right here you know and

intermittently and so forth. So I went to Mr. Farris and I told him about this woman he said well hire her. I did, I wish I had recorded & I was too busy; you can't do everything in this life. She was the most faithful person, Fannie was her name, Fannie Jackson & she came early in the morning when I came she assisted them the other & I had four matrons I guess in the various & uh & ah & dining areas you know the & the & we served lunches and the toilet that were being taken care of and she'd go from time to time go and assist them. I wish I had & uh... I have a mental picture where she was bent over and she was always humming and singing and she'd have a pail in one hand and rags in the other and walked through the & and she knew everybody within three or four & she knew everybody in the plant you know and so forth. If I was there to eleven, twelve o'clock she never left me, never left me. We were the only company that didn't have & she was my & what to you call it & my ears you might say. She would get the news if there was anything going on & what do you call it? Grapevine & is it grapevine?

JF: Uh huh.

AK: She, she listened and if there was anything that she thought that wasn't going on right, you see she knew the black people and so on why uh & she'd come and tell me. If she suspected something & uh of course it was a time when you & there were strikes, there were strikes. We were the only plant that didn't have a strike during that whole war. She would go and if she suspected anything she'd get up on a barrel and uh & extemporaneously would sing about the war and helping the boys over there, how awful it would be to disappoint them & how you know & and we must win the war, you've got to stay on the job and so on, and they'd go back to work. Now that sounds fantastic doesn't it? But that was Fannie and she had a good for nothing & she was just like so many of those women deserted by men you know and she had a son that was a great problem & uh & if I'd stayed late & uh & she would often & uh & early in the morning she'd & I don't know where she got fish, you know the black people do know how to cook so many of the things and we had refrigeration in some of the places so she'd bring them, she knew & by that time she knew the plant as well as I did you know going through, and everybody just loved her they & that was Fannie you know she was the character of our l & of, of the plant.

JF: Uh huh.

AK: Well by the way for the & [interruption] then she, yes she became ill and uh & died in the county hospital, I went to see her several times, she was precious, she was precious and I did get a good deal of help for her you know, and was able to get her the doctor, she was just & I think & uh & the son & the & the & uh & just did her up you know sometimes there are things that you just can't help people with.

JF: You & did blacks work separately from whites in the plant?

AK: Yes & well they worked together you might say in the plant but as far as toilet facilities and eating facilities were concerned they were still separated, they were still separated.

JF: Uh huh. This Regan the Regan cult- colts, were they from a particular background?

AK: well they were an Irish group, they were an Irish group, and they were terrible, uh, there's an, I wish I could get & it was called The Boss & Royko a columnist for the uh, fourth uh, Chicago daily news wrote this book, uh & The Boss & on &

JF: Mayor Daley?

AK: ah & Governor Daley, I mean Mayor Daley, I have a soft spot for Daley however. Want me to tell you a funny story? You when I began teaching I married and...and I think & I would have lost my health entirely because I worked eighteen to & I could tell you the story & this was during the flu epidemic when people were dying like ants and Stella and I the company would make big, big containers of soups and we'd take it to the people, you couldn't & the people weren't even there, there were no funerals you know, a whole family would die out, maybe the wife would die and the father would be left with the children. Now this was all beside my work you know & it & it, we'd find out you see through the record, you know people come into my office we'd find out about these things and we'd go out to the families and help them. Oh these things will come up & it's surprising how & well this is what I'll have to be doing jotting down and taking it as I think of these things you know & now what was I saying?

JF: Mayor, Mayor Daley & the story.

AK: Yes, uh when I began teaching, you see I had a certain uh & diversified career. I tell you whenever a challenge is over I'm ready for a new challenge. After I was married, oh, during that time too & uh I was acquainted with a Miss. Frances Whitmore who was of the Banker family in Boston or Philadelphia, I don't & I can't remember which and she was one of these & see so many of these social workers came from the east, they were maiden women, that had these careers, and this was the beginning of uh & now my mother went to night school to learn to read and write in uh & English, she was literate in her own & oh my mother, my parents had a marvelous background, they, they both worked in Vienna or Prague and even in their kind of work they had all the cultural advantages; going to the operas, going to the concerts.. my mother knew all the arias of the & of, of all the operas and so on, my father did too. Uh & I got side tracked &

JF: That & we were told & you were telling a story about Mayor Daley

AK: Oh yes & uh & we, well I was going to tell ya about Miss. Whitmore &

JF: Uh huh

AK: Uh & She was interested; you see this was during the war too, when foreign born people didn't have their citizenship papers. So to prepare them for citizenship she started these classes & wanted these classes started and I had & of course there so many of the who were totally illiterate, and during the noon period I got the women or the men together for ten minutes and in the dining room we'd teach them too & I'd have a big black board, that's another thing that Mr. Farris let me have; big black boards. And & uh & maybe it would be ten, fifteen minutes

and I began teaching them how to write their names, most of them didn't know how to write their names, and then for citizenship, uh & Miss & uh, in between time when I found time, uh & we had classes at the settlement for citizenship and of course this happened after I & I was married, uh & we'd have & preparing them for & for getting their papers and of course again my languages helped me out all &

[END OF TAPE]