

WORLDS OF PAIN AND JOY
(REFLECTIONS ON WORKING-CLASS LIVES)

BY

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Hats off to the working class of the United States! Hats off, particularly to my special senior citizens of Flint, Michigan, who are members of that working class! By graciously agreeing to be the subjects of my study, these adventurous individuals have made this paper possible. They have sincerely shared their life stories, and it is to them that I dedicate this thesis.

The impetus for researching the working class has come primarily from two assignments required by "The Family In Historical Perspective" course at the University of Michigan, Flint. I feel fortunate to have been given the opportunity for the first assignment to trace my family background. The research was fascinating and informative for me and for other members of my family. It helped provide a sense of connectedness between my life and earlier generations on both my mother's and my father's sides of the family. It also whet my appetite for knowing more about my parents' lives and about the lives of other people of their generation whom I have known throughout my lifetime. In contrast, the second assignment brought a very different kind of reaction. It jolted me into seriously reflecting on the working-class experience of life. Having been required to read Lillian Breslow Rubin's book, Worlds Of Pain (Rubin, 1976), I discovered that the author offers an intriguing perspective on the lives of working-class people in the United States. Rubin believes that working-class lives

are so filled with pain that they are almost devoid of joy. She believes that working-class people can never really be happy, that they find it difficult to even imagine what it means to be happy (Rubin, 1976: 207). Rubin identifies well with the struggles of the working class, but her portrayal of their lives did not seem to square with my own working-class experiences in my family of origin. Consequently, I began to wonder about her perspective and whether or not it might apply to my family and our friends.

My initial reaction to Worlds Of Pain was that Lillian Breslow Rubin had focused so much on the negative aspects of working-class lives that she almost completely ignored the positive. My opinion was based on the personal experience of growing up on the east side of Flint, Michigan, during the 1950's and 60's. My mother and father were factory workers who labored hard to provide a good life for themselves and their family. Life was not always easy, but my recollections of life at 917 Walnut Street are happy memories much different from the situations described in Worlds Of Pain. If there was a lot of frustration, anger, or resentment in our home I missed it. Instead, I experienced genuine feelings of contentment, love, and security. These are the feelings and memories I have carried with me throughout my lifetime. Therefore, I wondered why my life was seemingly so different from the lives Rubin described. I wondered if she was way off base, or if I was simply an unusually lucky member of the working class, totally removed from the pain and struggles of "normal" working-class people.

After much reflection I came to the conclusion that the truth probably lies somewhere between these two extremes. Working-class lives are not simply worlds of pain, but are a mixture of positive and negative experiences which can be more accurately described as "worlds of pain and joy."

Desiring to discover whether or not my opinion about the working class was correct I decided to investigate the life courses of six senior citizens of Flint, Michigan, who have been important in my life. They were born into the working class and have been associated with the automobile factory system for most of their lives. I believed that studying their lived experiences would either provide evidence for my viewpoint or give credence to Rubin's views. In addition, I believed that I could clarify my thinking by also turning to experts on working-class lives. Therefore, I consulted several authors, particularly Ronald Edsforth, David Halle, Richard Sennett, Jonathan Cobb, and Maxine Baca Zinn, who have done significant research on the working class. What will follow in this thesis is a presentation of the life courses of my six special senior citizens and an evaluation of their lives in light of Rubin's ideas and the findings of these specific experts.

My decision to focus on senior citizens rather than another age group was both personal and academic. On the personal level, seniors were an easy choice because my relationships with them over the years have been extremely positive. Throughout my lifetime I have admired and respected my parents, other senior family members, friends of my parents, and senior neighbors.

Fascination with their stories, attitudes, and experiences has inspired me to learn more about them. Undertaking this thesis would provide the opportunity to explore and better understand the time frame and geographical setting of their lives, as well as the background of the Flint area where they have experienced those lives. On the academic level, seniors seemed a logical choice because they have accumulated a greater number of years to consider than any other age group. I believed that focusing on seniors would provide a valuable life-course perspective that would go beyond what life had been like in the subjects' families of origin and during their years of employment outside the home to include the retirement years also. I believed it could provide insight into what life was like during the working years, as well as what results came from them. In other words, the retirement years might shed light on the seniors' earlier experiences and help put the years of growing up and working outside the home into a larger context of their overall life courses. Such a focus could provide significant insight into the entire lived experience of the working class.

At the outset of this endeavor I wondered how to go about discovering the information necessary to substantiate or refute my belief that the working class is not merely a group of pained individuals, but instead, people who experience lives of pain and joy. Having already traced my own family background I knew that the answer did not lie in genealogical research because it would not furnish enough information about the day to day lives of the subjects to understand their experiences as fully

as possible. Tracing backgrounds would, perhaps, permit insight into my special seniors' ancestral heritage, but it would not provide the "heart and soul" of their daily lives. I would need to do more than read between the lines of ancestral information to truly understand the lived experience of my seniors. I concluded that speaking with them directly, personally hearing what their lives had been like, how they felt about them, what their disappointments, hurts, accomplishments, and joys had been, would be the best way to approach this research. It would generate first-hand information rather than second-hand observations that might miss significant events or personal feelings. Interviewing the seniors would allow me to enjoy their company and satisfy my personal goal of getting to know them better. It would also provide a vehicle for discovering information necessary for proving or disproving my theory that working-class lives are a mixture of pain and joy.

It was at this point that Dr. Leslie Moch, a professor from The University of Michigan, Flint, suggested a process called prosopography. Being unfamiliar with this concept I began to investigate. The most concise definition I found was provided by Webster's Dictionary (New International Unabridged, 1976), which states that prosopography is a "discussion of a person's appearance, character and career" (p. 1821) or a "collection of biographical sketches and the activity of producing such a collection" (p. 1821). The purpose of this approach would be to capture something about the experience

of a particular group. That was exactly what I wanted to accomplish. Prosopography would allow me to discover many interesting and important facts about each senior, but would go beyond individual biographies. The result would be a collection of biographies that would reveal the experiences of this particular group. Prosopography in this case would be the process of collecting biographical sketches of six working-class senior citizens and discovering their collective experience. It would be a vehicle for moving beyond individual stories to a group history which would encompass individual personalities and experiences but would also permit comparisons. It would include individual backgrounds, such as life in the family of origin, specific places of employment, and current life situations, but would also provide a composite picture of the life course of working-class seniors of Flint, Michigan. Gaining a composite picture would help me to understand the subjects of this study well enough to discover whether or not Rubin's assessment of working-class lives applies to them as well. It would help me discover whether they have experienced lives of pain, as Rubin believes, or lives of pain and joy as I had hoped to substantiate.

Believing that prosopography would be the best method for achieving my goals I concluded that the next step was to determine how to effectively employ this process. Specifically, it was necessary to decide how to conduct interviews that would obtain the appropriate information for making legitimate conclusions about the seniors' lives. To familiarize myself

with different methods of interviewing I consulted The Research Act (Denzin, 1970). In this book, author, Norman Denzin, delineates three types of interview: the schedule standardized, the non-schedule standardized or focused interview, and the nonstandardized (Denzin, p. 122-132). The schedule standardized interview is the most tightly structured of the three types. Not only does it employ a specific wording for each question, but the order of all questions is exactly the same for each person interviewed. The nonschedule standardized interview is less tightly structured. It seeks certain types of information but the phrasing and the order of questions may vary among the different interviewees. The nonstandardized interview is loosely structured. It uses neither a predetermined set of questions nor a specific order for the types of questions that might be asked.

I ruled out the schedule standardized interview because it seemed too restrictive. To ask questions with precisely the same wording and in the same order could have helped bring structure and uniformity to the interviews, but it might have eliminated the spontaneity of the individuals. I did not want the interviews to be so structured that the seniors would feel confined to those exact questions. I wanted life from their perspective not just a reporting of life aspects that I had steered them into discussing. As Denzin states, "Central assumptions of the life history are that human conduct is to be studied and understood from the perspective of the persons involved (Denzin, 1970: 220)." My goal was to set a relaxed

atmosphere in which the individuals could tell their life stories and feel free to share information as it came to mind, thus making the stories more genuinely theirs. A schedule standardized interview would not have helped that goal.

Next I ruled out the nonstandardized interview because it appeared to be too wide open. Lacking a predetermined set of questions and having no specific order for the types of questions that might be asked, this approach, it seemed, would cause the interviews to wander from one topic or event to another without providing any structure for consistency in gathering vital data. It likely would not have been conducive to gathering from each person similar kinds of information that would be needed for making comparisons and drawing valid conclusions.

My choice was the nonschedule standardized interview. I was convinced that it would live up to its description as the "focused interview" (Denzin, p. 125) because it appeared structured enough to provide perimeters for surfacing pertinent information. It would key in on the same kind of data for each person by employing specific questions as the basis for the interview. On the other hand, it would permit flexibility in the order and phrasing of questions so that the seniors could tell their stories and clarify information as needed. It would help create a comfortable atmosphere that would make it inviting for them to share their stories.

In reality, my approach was an adaptation of the nonschedule standardized interview because it included a structured questionnaire that could be used flexibly (Please see appendix

for a copy). The questionnaire was designed to focus on facts, such as date of birth, number of children in the family of origin, level of education, types, places, and number of years of employment, length of marriage, and number of children. It also included opinion questions, such as why the interviewees went to work, why they retired, what local or world event affected them significantly, and how each senior would describe his/her life. The questionnaire included thirty-five questions which facilitated the consistency of information appropriate for allowing comparisons among the seniors. Although it was typed and printed so that each person received an exact duplicate, the flexibility occurred in how it was used during the interview.

Approximately four to six weeks prior to conducting the interviews I contacted the interviewees to explain the focus of my thesis, to seek approval for an interview, and to provide them with the two-page questionnaire. During this initial contact I assured the seniors that they would be helping me with a project and that it should be an enjoyable experience for each of us. I also indicated that I would appreciate gaining insights into their lives and might be able to offer some interesting comparisons or contrasts among the various life courses. It was my hope that presenting them with the questionnaire a few weeks prior to the interview would give the seniors a clearer idea of the kinds of information we would be discussing at a future date in more detail. I also believed that presenting the questionnaire in advance would allow the

seniors adequate time to think about relevant facts. Consequently, they would be free during the interview to comfortably relate their stories without having to immediately recall specific dates or details. Likewise, I could enjoy those stories without the fear of overlooking vital information, such as birth dates, marriage dates, or number of years employed. In effect, the questionnaire functioned as a fact and information gathering tool prior to the interviews. Then it served as an aid to clarifying the life course stories during the interviews, at which time I could refer to the sheet without having to use it in a line by line fashion. Later, it would also serve as a reference sheet while I played the audio tapes that had been recorded during the interviews. The overall process could remain focused but flexible due to the use of adapted nonschedule standardized interviews.

All the interviews took place in the seniors' homes for their convenience and to provide a familiar setting which would help dispel whatever apprehension they might have felt about this project. On the day of the interview I informed the subjects of my desire to tape the conversation so that I could help ensure the accuracy of my reporting. I also encouraged them to share only what they felt comfortable sharing. It was not my intent to create unnecessary anxiety nor to delve into matters they preferred to keep private. I did encourage the seniors, however, to remember as far back into childhood as possible in order to get a comprehensive overview of their life courses. They were free to tell their stories as they wished

and, at times, provided details which did not seem especially relevant to this thesis, but indirectly gave me insights into their personalities, family background, or life experiences. Occasionally I asked specific questions, such as "who performed which household tasks, why did you choose to work where you did, or what event in your life had a significant impact on you and how?" Occasionally I would also ask the seniors to return to a period of time or particular incident mentioned earlier in the interview in order to gain further insights or to clarify details I was unsure of. Therefore, none of the interviews flowed in a completely linear fashion from the beginning of their lives to the present. Instead, the conversations moved around allowing the subjects to fill in missing pieces or to clarify information as they remembered it. The interviewees responded willingly to the questions and sometimes returned voluntarily to earlier topics in order to supply additional information. All in all, the visits were very relaxed, enjoyable, and informative. One of the participants, George Vreeland, enthusiastically commented, "I wondered what we would talk about for an hour and here we talked for over three hours, and the time flew by."

At the outset I did not indicate how long the interviews would take. In the first place, I was not sure how much time would be required to hear their stories and gather appropriate information. Secondly, I preferred not to confine the participants to an allotted period of time. I wanted to allow them the time necessary to share the life events which would

be valuable for making comparisons and for proving or disproving my hypothesis. I chose to listen to whatever they had to say and to help direct the interviews when necessary by asking specific questions. Being especially comfortable with my parents, I chose to interview them first in order to gain a sense of the time required for subsequent interviews. It also allowed me to test the process I had chosen to use. Due to some scheduling difficulties it was necessary to meet with them on four separate days for a combined total of approximately seven hours. Because three weeks had lapsed between the first and second visits with my father, some repetition of information occurred. Also, because I was somewhat familiar with my parents' life courses already, I knew when information had been omitted and requested additional facts for my own interest and for the benefit of the thesis. By the time the interviews with my parents had been completed I knew that an open ended block of several hours would be the most effective time frame for accomplishing my goals. Not only could repetition be avoided, but I was also more prepared to help direct the discussions without stifling the freedom of the seniors to relate their stories. It turned out that about three and one-half to four hours were sufficient in each of the remaining interviews to adequately discuss the life courses of both husband and wife.

During the time spent in each home I interviewed husbands and wives separately concerning their own individual life courses. Separately, however, did not mean necessarily that the spouse was absent. In fact, in the Sam and Mabel Sly

household, as well as in the George and Emma Vreeland residence, husband and wife sat together at the dining room table while each spoke about his or her own life course. They felt secure enough with each other to be physically present and to provide mutual support as they told their individual stories. In the Art and Milly Sly household both interviewees were present together most of the time at the dining room table. Sometimes, however, one or the other moved about to answer the phone or to prepare a lunch for us while the spouse continued with the discussion. Because of their trust in each other they felt free to do so without disturbing the process. Mutual support was given and neither person seemed to feel a need to interrupt or shift the attention away from the partner. Consistently, in all three homes the husbands and wives sat together comfortably to discuss their married lives. I was impressed with the respect shown to spouses as each related his or her own story and as they spoke together of their joint lives. My concern that either individual might be inhibited by the presence of the other was not realized. The spouse's presence actually helped in all cases because each listened attentively and offered comments either at the partner's request or when freely given information was appropriate.

Once the interviews were completed the important work of writing the seniors' biographies began. Once again, I started with my parents' stories because they were the most familiar to me. I had not anticipated the long hours that would be required to listen to the tapes, refer to the questionnaire,

and compile information in a systematic, coherent, and chronologically accurate manner. All the pertinent facts and interesting stories needed organization and a spark of life in the form of the interviewees' own words. I had attempted to accurately capture the significant events of the participants' lives through the use of the questionnaire, attentive listening and clarification of information during the interviews, and by tape recording the conversations. Yet, to put the content into biographical form meant that it would be necessary in a few instances to call the interviewees for additional clarification. Furthermore, to ensure the accuracy of the biographies and to allow the seniors the opportunity to request the addition or deletion of information, I asked them to read their own biographies before the final product was completed. The seniors' receptiveness to the follow up calls and to reading the biographies was heartening. A genuine interest in their own stories and the entire thesis provided an extra element of support which reinforced my belief that using the concept of prosopography to gain insight into the lives of these residents of Flint, Michigan, was a wise decision. I was able to discuss their life courses, learn about their employment, and gain insight into each of their characters. I was able to compile a collection of biographical sketches and capture something about their lived experience. Prosopography was the process and the resulting collection of biographical sketches which appear in this paper.

An indepth look at Worlds Of Pain, plus the presentation

of ideas from other authors who help shed light on working-class lives, provide the starting point of this thesis. Both have been included in the same chapter so that a variety of academic viewpoints might be considered alongside Rubin's perspective. My objective was to share the ideas of several authors so that my hypothesis could be strengthened, if possible, but refuted, if necessary.

A brief history of Flint, Michigan, follows the presentation of ideas from the various scholars. It precedes the biographies because knowing more about the place in which the subjects of this thesis have lived helps the understanding of their collective experience. It provides a context or background for the events and feelings which they share in their stories. This history covers the time period from the beginnings of Flint up through the automobile boom of the 1950's and '60's. It provides the background of the seniors' years of growing up and working outside the home. The various subjects of this thesis came onto the Flint scene after its development from a rural area and during the early years of the automobile industry. They lived part of their lives during the development of that industry, spent much of their lives associated with automobile factories, and retired from factory work prior to the economic slump of the industry during the 1980's. In other words, their lives were intertwined with the automobile industry and continue to be greatly influenced by it. The history of Flint contained in this paper chronicles the development of Flint as a factory town and provides the historical setting

which helps shed light on the life experiences of the seniors.

The biographies have been included in one chapter. They have been organized so that the reader can learn first about the lives of each person prior to life with the spouse, then about their married lives. For example, the biography of Mildred Gonyaw appears first. Arthur C. Sly's comes next. The biography of their married lives together follows. The same progression occurs with the other seniors; each person's biography appears first, then the account of their lives together follows. This format allows the reader to first know the participants as individuals, then as couples, thus permitting an understanding of the entire life course of each person up to the time of the interview.

The final chapter includes an analysis of the biographies, reflections on the scholars' findings as they relate to the seniors, and a conclusion to the thesis. In pulling together findings from the biographies and from the various authors I have attempted to take a serious look at my special seniors of Flint, Michigan. It is my hope in using this approach that I am able to offer enjoyable, informative reading, and perhaps, some new insights about the working-class experience of life.

THE AUTHORS' VIEWPOINTSLILLIAN BRESLOW RUBIN

In her book, Worlds of Pain, author Lillian Breslow Rubin discusses the quality of life of American working-class families during the 1970's. She covers several aspects of working-class life which are relevant to this thesis. I will attempt to provide a brief overview of her key ideas.

For her study Rubin interviewed fifty white working-class families in 1976 who shared the following characteristics:

They are all intact families, neither husband nor wife has more than a high school education, the husband works in what is traditionally defined as a blue-collar occupation, the wife was under forty at the time of the study, and there was at least one child of elementary school age (under twelve) still in the home (Rubin, 1976: 4).

For the purpose of contrast and more specifically to pinpoint the working-class experience, Rubin also interviewed twenty-five professional middle-class families "whose characteristics match the working-class group in all but their education and occupation (Rubin, 1976: 10)." While the middle-class subjects were important for Rubin's study they were not the primary focus of her work nor are they integral to the focus of this thesis. I mention them simply to shed light on Rubin's procedures. To accomplish my purposes I will concentrate on her findings about the working class.

Rubin discovered that her working-class subjects were initially somewhat hesitant about the interviews yet quite willing to welcome her into their homes:

All the people in this study participated in

intensive interviews which often took as many as ten hours and required several visits. Every working-class family was interviewed in their home--in fact, welcomed me into it (Rubin, 1976: 10).

Their homes, whether located in newer subdivisions or in older neighborhoods were generally well kept both inside and out. All contained a color television and some had campers or boats in their driveways. Outward appearances seemed to indicate that things were going well for the working class. According to Rubin, however, through the course of her interviews she discovered that things were not well nor had they been good during the growing up years of the interviewees:

Over and over, that's the story--a corrosive and disabling poverty that shattered the hopes and dreams of their young parents, and twisted the lives of those who were stuck together. . . . Thus, of the people I met, 40 percent had at least one alcoholic parent, usually but not always the father; almost as many were children of divorce or desertion; and 10 percent spent part of their lives in institutions or foster homes because their parents were unable, unwilling, or judged unfit to care for them (Rubin, 1976: 23).

Working-class lives, according to Rubin were filled with pain, bitterness, loneliness, anger, rebelliousness, and resignation which had been characteristic in the childhood years and carried into adulthood (Rubin, 1976: 24 & 25). Underlying all of these feelings, explains Rubin, is the experience of poverty:

Even in the most consistently stable families, however, the first and fundamental fact of most of their lives was that they were poor. Not one person, even those from the most solid and integrated homes, failed to mention growing up poor--some worse off than others, to be sure, but all whose dominant experience of childhood was material deprivation (Rubin, 1976: 29).

Poverty in their lives may have been either consistent, or perhaps intermittent due to a parent's job loss, a divorce, or an illness. Whatever the precise circumstances, poverty was their experience.

Some families dealt with their situations in what Rubin describes as "settled-living" styles, while others, she says, chose "hard-living" styles (Rubin, 1976: 30). Those in "settled-living" families were part of a stable family and had a sense of rootedness. Their fathers worked everyday and their mothers kept the house in "shining order" (Rubin, 1976: 32). In contrast, the "hard-living" families experienced unstable family relations characterized by violence, much moving from place to place, and alcoholism. Rubin explains that these descriptions indicate extremes in living and that families may actually have elements of each type. Within a "settled-living" family, for instance, there might be a "hard-living" brother, cousin, etc. (Rubin, 1976: 30 & 31). Whatever the situation, Rubin claims that there were very few happy childhoods:

There are always a few good memories, some families less troubled, more loving than the others; but happy childhoods: no. . . . For all, even the most settled livers, life was often mean and hard--hanging in a delicate balance, easily upset. . . . Whether they recall angry, discontented, drunken parents, or quiet, steady, 'always-there' parents, the dominant theme is struggle and trouble (Rubin, 1976: 46 & 47).

Rubin goes on to say that the situation is no different in the present than it was in the past for the working-class people whom she interviewed:

These realities not only reflect the past, but dominate the present--consciously or unconsciously underpinning the alternatives children can perceive, the choices they make, and the way they play out their roles in the new families they form as adults (Rubin, 1976: 48).

To substantiate her viewpoint Rubin relates that the working-class couples she interviewed felt constrained in their marriages due to marrying young, often having their first child within a few months of marrying, facing family responsibilities and economic difficulties, and realizing that the fun they had prior to marriage was over (Rubin, 1976: chapt. 5, 96-92). Rubin further builds her case with the explanation that the emotional aspects of marriage become relegated to economic responsibilities, that women suffer the strain of housework and caring for the children while the husband bears the burden of financial responsibilities for the family. Even if women work outside the home, according to Rubin, they are given the "doubtful privilege of doing two days work in one--one on the job and the other after they get home at night (Rubin, 1976: 103)." Rubin sees working class marriages characterized by problem upon problem, struggles without end:

In the early years, it's unemployment, poverty, crying babies, violent fights. That phase ends but a whole new set of problems emerge--problems that often seem harder to handle because they are less understandable, farther outside the realm of anything before experienced (Rubin, 1976: 133).

Rubin gives the working-class people credit for facing such problems yet portrays even their ability to handle them as grim:

But if there is one remarkable characteristic

about life among the working class, it is the ability to engage the struggle and to survive it--a quality valued in a world where life has been and often remains so difficult and so problematic. With a certain grim satisfaction, a twenty-six year old housewife, mother of two, summed it up: 'I guess in order to live, you have to have a very great ability to endure and survive (Rubin, 1976: 133).'

Survival and endurance, yes! Happiness and joy, no!

As Rubin sees it, work is no better than any other aspect of working-class life. While a few men, like skilled construction workers, mechanics, and truck drivers, hold jobs which offer personal gratification, most work at jobs "that require less skill, that have less room for independent judgement . . . and that leave their occupants with little freedom or autonomy (Rubin, 1976: 158)." Consequently, Rubin holds the opinion that "for all men in such jobs, bitterness, alienation, resignation, and boredom are the defining features of the work experience (Rubin, 1976: 159)."

For many of the women the situation is different, but Rubin believes it is that way only because the life of the housewife is so negative that work outside the home is appealing:

Most find the work world a satisfying place-- at least when compared to the world of the housewife. Therefore, although many of these women are pushed into the job market by economic necessity, they often stay in for a variety of other reasons. . . . There is, perhaps, no greater testimony to the deadening and deadly quality of the tasks of the housewife than the fact that so many women find pleasure in working at jobs that by almost any definition would be called alienated labor--low-status, low-paying, dead end work made up of dull, routine tasks; work that is often considered too menial for men who are less educated than these women. Nor is there greater

testimony to the efficacy of the socialization process. Bored and discontented with the never ending routine of household work, they seek stimulation in work outside the home. But a lifetime of preparation for housewifery and motherhood makes it possible to find gratification in jobs that require the same qualities--service, submission, and the suppression of intellectual development (Rubin, 1976: 169).

So, women work because it is financially necessary, but even more so, because the life of a housewife is so drab that work outside the home must be better than staying home.

It would seem that if the work situation is so negative for both men and women that leisure, at least, would be a positive part of their lives, something they could enjoy for itself. Not so, according to Rubin who believes that working-class people engage in leisure simply as a digression from their pain. She explains that while most of the working-class subjects said they liked to relax in the evenings, for many of them it means watching television to "block out life's painful realities and to drain off the tensions it produces (Rubin, 1976: 191)." Even those men who worked on projects, such as repairing automobile engines, and who took pride and pleasure in their efforts did so because "such after-work jobs may be the only ones they do that call upon them to use a wide range of skills and competencies . . . (Rubin, 1976: 186)."

At least men have the freedom to work on activities of their choosing. Women do not even have that option, Rubin says, because they have responsibility for the household chores and feel trapped by circumstances:

If his wife works outside the house, there

are after-dinner chores that demand her attention . . . all done under the pressure of guilt because she's not yet had any time with the children. . . . For those who have been home all day, it's a different story. They're more often bored and restless, feeling locked in by the walls of their houses, ready to get out--anyplace, just so long as it's out of the house (Rubin, 1976: 187-188).

Rubin goes on to say that most working-class people do not get weekly or monthly "days off" from work or the house. About one-fourth of the men, however, did get a "day off" with the guys to ride motorcycles, play cards, or go fishing. In those cases, such activities were participated in at the expense of the wives who would have to spend time with the children and other family members (Rubin, 1976: 192-199).

Some families had campers or boats but neither husband nor wife gained much by having them. In order to afford such a luxury the men had to work overtime. Consequently, there was little time available to go camping or boating. What time was available to the working-class, particularly on weekends, was spent with extended families:

Generally, it is the relationships with extended family--parents and siblings--that are at the heart of the working-class social life. Parents and married children exchange casual visits regularly throughout the year . . . (Rubin, 1976: 197).

Rubin explains that this family involvement "fills both available time and the need for social relationships (Rubin, 1976: 197)."

She goes on to talk about the husband-wife relationship in the early years of marriage and role which the extended family visiting plays in the relationship:

. . . these family relationships are reinforced

by the early and difficult years in the marriage when a major concern of the young wife was to break her husband's attachment to his high school peer group--those buddies with whom he used to 'hang out', to whom he fled when they had a fight (Rubin, 1976: 197).

Thus, even extended family involvement is not undertaken simply for the pleasure of it but to keep the husband in check. Leisure for the working-class, then, is not a positive experience no matter what form it takes:

With all, then, the leisure hours generally are quiet ones--spent mostly with the family or in family related activities. Husband and wife probably get away on their own without the children more often than their parents did. And in general, their leisure hours are more often spent together than in rigidly sex-segregated activities of earlier generations. Despite those changes, most still are frankly ambivalent about the quality of their leisure lives, often expressing a deep longing for more--for the freedom and fun that was the implicit promise of the adulthood they sought so eagerly. . . . Of course, people do find ways to tolerate the dullness and the disappointments--small compensations wrought sometimes at the expense of a mate, that make life easier to swallow. Meanwhile, they dream of the future . . . (Rubin, 1976: 203).

So, they dream of the future while they suffer in the present. That is the assessment Rubin gives of working-class lives. In concluding her book Rubin states that, for most of her interviewees, there has been "less drinking and less violence in the family, more companionship, and more shared leisure moments than anything their parents had known (Rubin, 1976: 206)." Yet, having said this, she goes on to claim that "even now, it's hard for working-class adults to imagine what it means to 'be happy,' hard to imagine a life that's very different from the one being lived (Rubin, 1976: 207)." Rubin truly

believes that the working-class experience is characterized by pain and suffering, that it is endured rather than enjoyed. Working-class people cannot even imagine being happy because their lives are filled with so much unhappiness. Their lives are so miserable, says Rubin, that they are enveloped in "worlds of pain."

RICHARD SENNETT AND JONATHAN COBB

Among other authors I read the writers who came the closest to Rubin's portrayal of working-class pain and suffering were Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb. In their book, The Hidden Injuries Of Class (1972), they present the theory that respect in the United States is tied to the belief that men are responsible for determining their own social position. The result is that the working class suffers more than higher classes. They view their own social position as lower than others and of their own making (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: 36). According to Sennett and Cobb, several working men they interviewed wanted to have a sense of community with others but felt that they had to earn the right to be respected first by "showing others they could totally take care of themselves (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: 56)." The authors explain their viewpoint quite clearly:

The position we take in this book is that everyone in this society, rich and poor, plumber and professor, is subject to a scheme of values that tells him he must validate the self in order to win others' respect and his own. When the plumber makes this attempt, however, the feelings involved are quite different than when a

professor does it. The examples we have so far given of assertion of individual ability in families point to three general results of such assertion: the search for respect is thwarted; the individual feels personally responsible for the failure; the whole attempt accustoms him to think that to have individual respect you must have social inequality (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: 75).

Sennett and Cobb go on to talk about workers viewing more educated white-collar men as better able to control their own lives and as having dignity, yet simultaneously viewing them as repugnant (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: 78). Workers strive to move to white-collar positions yet believe that labor is the only real work there is. Such ambivalence can create feelings of personal shame. A worker may sacrifice long hours of work for the betterment of his family, but the family might want to take their own responsibility or might want more of his presence instead. A worker may hope for his children to achieve success yet may feel inferior to them when they do succeed. Sennett and Cobb believe that workers are caught in a dilemma. Even if they believe they do not truly have the freedom to control their lives they feel that they are responsible for their own social position. Even if they strive to better themselves and their families they experience ambivalent feelings about the value in doing so. Sennett and Cobb agree with Rubin that life is futile for the working class. Frustration seems to be their lot in life.

MAXINE BACA ZINN

In her book, Diversity In Families (Zinn, 1990), author,

Maxine Baca Zinn, attempts to "understand families in our society (Zinn, 1990: Preface, XII)." Although she does not focus exclusively on the working class, Zinn offers insights pertinent to this thesis. One of her premises is that family status or economic condition is primarily the result of structures in society rather the product of the particular culture of a group:

Households in different parts of the class structure have different connections with the outside economy and different ways of acquiring the necessities of life. . . . All families in America are under cultural constraints to appear autonomous but there are class-based differences in the abilities of households to realize the ideal of autonomy and self-support (Zinn, 1990: 103).

Zinn goes on to say that members of the working class are more likely than those in the middle class "to be unemployed from time to time, and therefore more likely to fall into poverty (Zinn, 1990: 103)." She speaks very specifically about the plight of the working class:

As workers and their families confront inadequate resources, monotonous and unchallenging work, unsafe working conditions, dead-end jobs, the unrelenting threat of unemployment, and low self-esteem, their family lives are negatively affected (Zinn, 1990: 197).

Even further, Zinn agrees with Sennet and Cobb's idea that workers have feelings of inadequacy and self-blame. Likewise, she concurs with Rubin's viewpoint that those feelings have a negative impact on family life, such as spouse abuse or lack of family involvement by the husband/father (Zinn, 1990: 197). In essence, Zinn shares a line of thinking similar to Rubin, Sennett, and Cobb. The working class is a distressed group of people.

DAVID HALLE

In his book, America's Working Man (Halle, 1984), and in a related article, "Marriage and Family Life of Blue-Collar Men" (Halle, 1987), David Halle provides a perspective somewhat different from that of the previous authors. He believes that many aspects of family life considered characteristic of the working class may not be limited only to workers or, on the other hand, may not even apply to all members of the working class:

Yet studies of the family life of American blue-collar workers stress the way in which their marriages are unlike those of the middle class. Rubin, for instance, argues that the marriages of blue-collar workers are distinct above all because of the misery that pervades them. They are, as she puts it, 'worlds of pain.'

Such a view goes too far for the workers I studied. Certain characteristics of these blue-collar husbands do add a distinct flavor to their marriages. . . . The impact of these features should not be ignored. Yet for a balanced picture it is important to place these distinguishing features in the context of the similarities between these marriages and those of the middle class (Halle, 1987: 317).

Halle further explains that the people he interviewed worked at a New Jersey chemical plant where wages and benefits were higher than average for blue-collar workers in the United States. They were represented by a union, and the factory was rather modern (Halle, 1987: 317).

Hoping to investigate similarities between the working class and the middle class, Halle felt that "if any blue-collar group is 'middle class,' then these workers should be (Halle, 1987: 317)." His point is that, although his subjects were

working class in their jobs, they earned as much or more than many white-collar workers and were able to "buy the same houses and consumer goods and services as many white-collar employees and to engage in many of the same leisure activities (Halle, 1987: 332)." Consequently, these blue-collar workers often saw themselves as working class in terms of their workplace, but seldom viewed themselves the same way outside the workplace:

Above all, most workers contrast what they see as a certain fluidity in their lives outside the workplace with their considerably more restricted lives at work. . . . Most Imperium workers do not see the class structure outside the workplace as a graduated and benevolent hierarchy, but they do see it as having some fluidity in its middle range, as in fact it has (Halle, 1987: 335).

In terms of the workplace, itself, Halle believes that workers faced with monotonous tasks "use a variety of means to increase their control of the situation (Halle, 1984: 146)," whether it be less obvious actions of concealing information from supervisors or more visible strategies, such as that of walkouts and wildcat strikes (Halle, 1984: 147). Workers are not simply pawns in a game over which they have no control. They exert their influence in the work place for their own good and for the benefit of fellow workers. Overall, then, considering their ability to make some impact on the working situation and taking into account their standard of living, Halle sees working-class lives, at least for the seventy-nine workers he interviewed, as generally more positive than the previous authors do.

RONALD EDSFORTH

Ronald Edsforth also assesses working-class lives as more positive than our first few authors do. In his book, Class Conflict And Cultural Consensus (Edsforth, 1987), he provides a unique perspective by placing his evaluation within the context of the historical development referred to as The Second Industrial Revolution (Edsforth, 1987: 1-11). Therefore, it is necessary to understand this historical development before looking at Edsforth's evaluation of his subjects. This understanding is not only necessary but is also particularly relevant because he has chosen Flint, Michigan, as the focus of his study. The Second Industrial Revolution has four primary characteristics. First, science and technology have been so completely intertwined that science has been "transformed into capital (Edsforth, 1987: 2)." In contrast to the first Industrial Revolution, which was characterized by a few important inventions, science and industry have become so interwoven that spontaneous change has been replaced by the planned progress of technology (Edsforth, 1987: 2). Secondly, "a systematic expansion and rationalization of factory production (Edsforth, 1987: 2)" led to mass production of goods. This development brought mixed results. Negatively, it "greatly intensified the alienation of factory labor by reducing skill requirements and the need to think on the job (Edsforth, 1987: 3)." Positively, it helped to improve living standards. Thirdly, the size of businesses increased significantly. "Big integrated firms were best equipped to meet the sustained high cost of

science-based mass production (Edsforth, 1987: 3)." Finally, the Second Industrial Revolution was characterized by "the creation of mass markets for technologically complex consumer goods (Edsforth, 1987: 4)." The United States in particular developed a "consumer-oriented industrial economy (Edsforth, 1987: 4)."

Edsforth's discussion of the Second Industrial Revolution is relevant to an evaluation of working-class lives because he sees the revolution as the basis for lessening class tensions in society and ultimately for satisfaction in the lives of the working class:

Moreover, as psychologist, Robert Reiff, a former Chrysler welder, has recently pointed out, the popular academic stereotype of the alienated worker ignores the fact that the workers show a great deal of initiative in developing ways to get satisfaction out of the work situation rather than the product itself. Even more significantly, by the late 1920's the material and psychological rewards of consumer-oriented capitalism had begun to compensate for the demands of work (Edsforth, 1987: 31).

Consumers, according to Edsforth, during this Second Industrial Revolution began to see their jobs as instruments to achieve something they wanted rather than as ends in themselves. They would work, not necessarily because they saw intrinsic value in their jobs or considered their work as a craft, but because they could gain some type of material benefit from their efforts.

Ronald Edsforth explains further that he sees the automobile as the impetus for this attitude of consumption in the United States. He believes that everything in American culture has been transformed by it:

America became the world's first true consumer-oriented society because its citizens were eager to reshape their land and their everyday lives to accommodate the gasoline-powered motor car (Edsforth, 1987: 13).

This desire for accommodation is particularly relevant to the working class in Flint, Michigan, because they have been actively involved in manufacturing automobiles:

During the first half of the twentieth century the industrial community in Flint, Michigan, lived on the cutting edge of America's second industrial revolution. As the birthplace and largest production center of the General Motors Corporation, Flint experienced all the basic economic changes of the automobile boom in a compressed, dramatic way that accentuated their impact on everyday life, on class relationships, and on political culture (Edsforth, 1987: 38).

While producing automobiles the factory workers in Flint were instrumental in changing transportation in the United States. They were also an integral part of developing a city with a positive relationship between the working class and the business community:

Thus, despite some ethnic diversity and very clear economic stratification, a rather homogeneous industrial society, which encouraged individual materialism and deference to business class leadership emerged in Flint (Edsforth, 1987: 72).

In Edsforth's estimation, automobile factory workers accepted the leadership of the Flint area businessmen because there were rewards in it for them. Having become part of a consumer-oriented society factory workers were interested in the money they could earn and the products that their money could buy. Although some workers may have complained, most even accepted

the seasonal nature of factory work:

These working people ultimately came to view the annual layoffs for model changeovers and the periodic reductions in production schedules as normal features of full-time employment (Edsforth, 1987: 116).

This accepting attitude was consistent throughout the development of the automotive industry until the failure of the U.S. economy during the Great Depression when ". . . the collapse of the national automobile market began to strip Flint's working people of the high wages and steady work . . . (Edsforth, 1987: 72)." The workers' struggle to keep what they had been accustomed to having eventually led to the Great Sit-Down Strike of 1936-1937. The working class had accepted the leadership of businessmen but would not settle for poor working conditions or low wages. They would fight for what they felt was rightly theirs. In fact, by 1940 the City of Flint had changed from a company town to a union town: "Never again would the local business class be able to dominate the public life of Flint in the same way it had prior to 1930 (Edsforth, 1987: 187-188)."

Edsforth believes that the workers' willingness to fight for their rights was firm but not an indication of a wider dissatisfaction with the United States nor the capitalist system of government. They may have become alienated from a sense of involvement in a craft but not from the American system:

Radical union organizers, who viewed the automobile workforce quite differently as the epitome of what Marx had called alienated labor, could never really understand, and therefore never reach their potential constituents (Edsforth, 1987: 89).

The workers had been willing to work with business and, although

the conditions of the Depression years brought labor and management into major conflict, workers continued to cooperate with business during and after World War II:

By the 1920's, industrial welfare work, community fund-raising, and philanthropy provided local citizens with the highest degree of social security and the widest array of public services they had ever known. For this reason, historical criticism of the manipulative aspects of Flint's welfare capitalism, made with full knowledge of the inadequacies that were exposed by the Great Depression, must be tempered with the recognition that it did contribute to higher living standards and that it was never generally resented (Edsforth, 1987: 191).

As economic conditions improved following World War II tensions between workers and business eased until "in 1950, a long-term contract fixed what William Serrin described as the 'civilized relationship' between General Motors and the U.A.W. (Edsforth, 1987: 191)." Workers and business were once again working together. Workers would continue to fight for rights through negotiation, if possible, and through strikes, if necessary. Yet the underlying willingness to deal with business remained. According to Edsforth, the workers of Flint, Michigan, have been part of the consumer-oriented society spawned by the Second Industrial Revolution. They have not always been happy with management's policies and procedures, but they have been basically willing to buy into the system in order to make a living and, perhaps, establish better economic situations.

The factory workers in Flint, Michigan, from Ronald Edsforth's point of view, appear to have had a more positive experience of life than the workers in Rubin's study or those

discussed by Sennett, Cobb, and Zinn. Their experience seems to have been similar to that of the Imperium workers studied by Halle. Recognizing that different investigations have resulted in mixed interpretations about the working-class quality of life, I will proceed first with a brief history of Flint, Michigan, and then on to the biographies of my special seniors of Flint in order to assess their life experiences.

A HISTORY OF FLINT, MICHIGAN: THE BEGINNINGS TO THE 1950s

THE BEGINNINGS

Flint, Michigan, the home of my special seniors, had already experienced a rich history by the time Art Sly, the oldest of these seniors was born in 1904. As was the case with other cities throughout the United States, the original inhabitants of the area had been Indians. Although historians are not absolutely certain how the city got its name, the widely accepted theory is that it comes from an Indian name for the Flint River that was translated "river of the flints" or "flint stones in the river." According to Lawrence Gustin in his Picture History of Flint, the river does not seem to be a "flinty" one (Gustin, 1976: 10). Consequently, historians are unable to explain the reason for the name. In fact, the late Arthur Pound, who had been a newspaper editor in Flint, offered a different explanation:

Here in Flint we used to argue how Flint got its name--maybe from an arrowhead, but when as state historian at New York I took to studying New York place names, it seemed reasonable that folks from Genesee County and Flint Creek region named this county and city for their old home sites, a common practice with homesick settlers all over the frontier (Gustin, 1976: 10).

Whatever the exact origin of the city's name, historians agree that Jacob Smith, a Detroiter, was the first permanent white settler in the area:

A few transient whites had been seen in the area before the opening of the nineteenth century: priests, military men, trappers, and traders. Others came in the first decades of the new century, one of them being a Detroit resident named Jacob Smith (Schafer, 1989: 1).

Smith, who had been born in Quebec, Canada, and had moved to the Detroit area to engage in fur trading, began looking for new markets when the competition around Detroit began to increase (Crow, 1945: 2). As early as 1811 Smith had hoped to set up a trading post along the Flint River, but a conflict between the United States and England, the War of 1812, determined otherwise:

The war delayed Smith's plan to set up a trading post, but he made a number of trips to the site gathering information about hostile Indian troops for the United States army, and once he narrowly escaped with his life. It was not until 1819 that he was able to go ahead with his plans (Crow, 1945: 6).

Jacob Smith's plans for the trading post were realized only after a meeting in Saginaw, Michigan, between Lewis Cass, the governor of the Michigan territory, and several Indian chiefs. Cass had hoped to establish some Indian reservations so that about six million acres of Indian lands could be opened up to white settlers. When negotiations faltered and it seemed that there would be no agreement, Smith stepped in to help negotiate. Being a personal friend of some of the chiefs he was successful in his efforts to get a treaty signed. In return for his work the government honored Smith's request for eleven sections of land on the Flint River to be set aside "as a special reservation for eleven persons with Indian names " (Crow, 1945: 6).

Jacob Smith was respected both by the United States Government and by the Indians. In fact, one of the reasons he was finally able to establish his trading post was the positive relationship he had developed with the Indians who,

up to the time of Smith's arrival, had been the only permanent residents of the area. Smith was a practical businessman but also a fair individual:

During a dozen years of intermittent travel and trading in the country of the Pewanigos (a tribe of the Chippewas) Smith had established a reputation for honesty and fair dealing out of which there grew a friendship between him and the local chieftan. In consequence the white man was allowed in 1819 to set up a permanent trading post at the river crossing, thus becoming the first permanent non-Indian resident of the area (Schafer, 1989: 1 & 2).

Smith only lived six years in his trading post on the Flint River when he died in 1825, yet in that short span of time he made significant contributions to the area:

. . . he is triply the founder of Flint. His first contribution was to have brought the Indians to make a peaceful cession of the territory in which the new community was to develop; his second was to have chosen the site by locating at the crossing of a river, where before his death he had been joined by several other white people. His third contribution was his most substantial: he managed to have written into the agreement between the Indians and the United States government an award to his children of the land north of the river (Smith's Reservation) on which the early Flint settlement (the area being restored in the 1980's as Carriagetown) was to develop. A decade after Smith's death two of his sons-in-law, Chauncey Payne and Colonel T.B.W. Stockton, by purchase acquired and subsequently developed large areas south of the river where the main business district of the city was located (Schafer, 1989: 2).

Jacob Smith, fur trader and friend of the Indians, had been looking out for his family when he managed to have land awarded to his children. He probably never realized that one day he would be considered the founder of Flint, Michigan, which in its earliest days was known as "The Flint River Settlement"

(Crow, 1954: 14 & 20). He also could probably never have imagined the growth that would take place in the Flint area. During his time Michigan was still a territory, and Genesee County did not yet exist. It was not until 1836 that Genesee County was officially established (Lethbridge, 1974: 23) and on January 26, 1837, that Michigan became a state. From the time of Jacob Smith's death in 1825 until Genesee County's first census in 1840 the county had grown to a population of 4,268 (Lethbridge, 1974: 35). As it grew, Flint was similar to many other frontier places throughout the United States in that it had set up small industries to take care of its local demands:

Among these were a brickyard, a gristmill, a sawmill, a tannery, a cigar factory, and a number of shops which made boots and shoes (Crow, 1954: 16).

While businesses such as these, which can be seen today in Genesee County's Crossroads Village, typify life as it was during the 1800's in many areas of the United States, there was something unique about the local businesses:

Flint was unlike other small towns not only in Michigan but other parts of the United States in the fact that these small establishments were not content to supply only the local demand but went after the business of neighboring districts. The territory supplied by these pioneer factories was small both in area and in volume, but Flint was a manufacturing center before it could boast a population of two thousand (Crow, 1954: 16).

LUMBERING

The initial business spirit of Flint's early settlers did not fade away. It saw continued growth as exemplified by the establishment of a significant lumbering industry. Mills

constructed along the Thread River in Grand Blanc and in Flint as early as 1828 and 1830 served local needs, but that was only the beginning:

By 1850, there were two sawmills operating on the Flint River, in Flint, producing three and a half million board feet of lumber. By then, the boom had begun: in 1854 seven mills in the county produced 16,800,000 board feet of lumber, most of which was shipped off to markets elsewhere via the Flint River or the plank road which in the 1830's had linked Flint to Pontiac (Schafer, 1989: 15).

As the lumbering business grew and the number of residents also grew people began to think of petitioning the state legislature to become a village. Since growth had been so strong, however, they decided to bypass that step and request the status of a city. It was determined in the charter that the name should be listed as "The City of Flint." Carl Crow explains:

This is actually the official name of the city, though shortened to Flint in the postal guide. The full name was used as the address of the Wolverine Citizen and by many local business houses until about the turn of the century (Crow, 1954: 20).

Although Flint had officially become a city, in 1855 it was not a city in the same sense as Flint in the 1990's. It did not have paved streets, automobiles, or institutions like the University of Michigan which are taken for granted today. While it had grown from what Jacob Smith had experienced during the early 1800's, it continued to remain quite rural in character as did most of the United States during the 1800's:

In appearance it remained a country town through most of the nineteenth century. Hay wagons lined both sides of Saginaw Street on market days, and farm animals ran loose during the day through the 1860's (Lethbridge, 1974: 44).

CARRIAGES

Into this country town of Flint came a man from New Bedford, Massachusetts, Henry Howland Crapo, who had invested in timber land in Lapeer County (Gustin, 1976: 49). Crapo arrived in January, 1856. By 1858 he had purchased two sawmills in the area and had moved his family from New Bedford to Flint. His business grew so large that he began to ship lumber out of state and even overseas (Gustin, 1976: 50). Since hauling lumber by horses and oxen over plank roads was expensive and slow, Crapo decided to establish a railroad line into Flint:

Crapo's Flint & Holly Railroad was opened for freight and passenger travel on November 1, 1864. . . . Less than two months later the Flint & Pere Marquette made arrangements with the Flint & Holly and the Detroit & Milwaukee to begin through passenger trains from Saginaw to Detroit. . . . With the coming of the railroad, Flint became a center of Michigan lumbering (Gustin, 1976: 50 & 51).

Due, at least in part, to the foresight and determination of Henry Crapo, Flint had come a long way from its beginnings. Crapo further helped Flint as its mayor from 1860-1862, as a state senator from 1862-1864, and as Governor of Michigan from 1864-1868 (Gustin, 1976: 51). During his years in public office the United States had suffered through the Civil War (1861-1865). Soldiers from Genesee County returning home after the war "generally found prosperous conditions and an atmosphere of eagerness to resume their pursuits (Lethbridge, 1974: 51)." By the time of Crapo's death in 1869 Flint was on the threshold of its lumbering industry's peak, which lasted from 1869-1871, "when mills along the Flint River had a capacity of 90 million

board feet annually (Gustin, 1976: 51)." Robert Schafer describes Flint's post Civil War years this way:

To sum up: in the half century which had elapsed since Jacob Smith had taken up residence in the unsettled wilderness north of Detroit there had come into existence in the area where he had built his cabin a bustling community of 33,895 people (5,386 in Flint City and 2,142 in Flint township with the rest in the outcounty areas). In that 50 years the early settlers, their descendents, and a yearly increment of American and foreign born people had brought into existence a productive farm system capable of supporting a growing population. They had also created a small but flourishing lumber (and allied trades) industry, and had gotten started on the creation of four further industries which were shortly to enhance the area's economy: woolen manufacturing, cigar making, carriage and furniture production (Schafer, 1989: 20).

Fortunately for Flint, woolen manufacturing, cigar making, and carriage making were successful industries. By the 1880's lumbering was on the decline, and these diverse industries helped keep Flint growing. The Flint Woolen Mills employed "up to 150 workers and sent products as far as San Francisco (Gustin, 1976: 78)." At the same time cigar making grew until, "By the end of the century there were several cigar factories producing 4,600,000 hand-rolled cigars in a year (Lethbridge, 1976: 52 & 53)." The strongest industry, however, proved to be carriage making. Since farming had been a way of life for a majority of people from the the earliest days of Flint and Genesee County, carriages and wagons were necessary not only for travel but also for transporting farm goods. Individual carriage makers had been around since about 1839 when the Miles brothers from Cazenovia, New York, settled in the area (Gustin, 1976: 79).

Having been partners in a vehicle and furniture business in New York they set up shop in the Flint River Settlement and operated there until about 1850. Others began operating as well:

In the 1840's, '50's, and '60's there were several other wagon and carriage makers in the Flint area. The Genesee Iron Works and a predecessor solved the problem of iron supplies. A year after Flint incorporated as a city in 1855, a state directory listed three wagon and carriage factories, ten blacksmith shops, four foundries, four harness shops, and two livery stables in Flint (Gustin, 1976: 79).

Others, like George Sturt and his son George Henry Sturt, built wagons at their business on South Saginaw Street "on the site of today's municipal Center (Lethbridge, 1976: 54)." The first large scale operation with enough employees to be called a factory was owned by brothers, Abner and Frank Randall, who began in the 1850's and continued through the 1880's (Lethbridge, 1976: 54). By the time the lumbering industry was declining larger carriage factories were being formed:

In the 1880's, local lumber operations had used up the stands of pine readily available. Flint made the transition from the harvesting of the pineries to another kind of creation of value. Diversified manufacturing increased in variety and volume. For example, the Begole, Fox & Co. lumber mill reorganized and changed its name and purpose, becoming the Flint Wagon Works (Young, 1971: 42).

The Flint Wagon Works, along with the W.F. Stewart Co. which started in 1868, the W.A. Paterson Co. which began in 1869, and the Durant-Dort Carriage Co. which had its beginnings in 1886 as the Flint Road Cart Co., and several smaller companies

brought Flint into the forefront of the carriage making industry:

By 1890 Flint was a vehicle center, developing a very large and lucrative carriage and wagon industry. The character, size, and quality of life of the city changed as Flint moved from being a lumber center to a vehicle center (Meister, 1971: 2).

By 1900 Flint was producing 15,000 vehicles a year (Crow, 1954: 36) and had become known as the vehicle city. It "was in the process of becoming the single largest producer of carriages in the United States, and perhaps the world (Schafer, 1989: 31)."

AUTOMOBILES

In 1905, fifty years after Flint's incorporation as a city, a golden jubilee celebration was held and an arch proclaiming Flint the "Vehicle City" was placed across Saginaw Street in downtown Flint. People celebrated the city's growth and development, particularly its carriages and wagons. Yet, just as Jacob Smith had likely not foreseen Flint's amazing growth from a frontier town to a lumbering center, the people celebrating the city's golden jubilee probably could not have imagined the significant developments which lay ahead:

As the 20th century began, Flint was about to enter two decades that would not only completely change its character from a small town to an industrial center, but would also give the city a place in world history.

In the first few years of the new century Flint would become one of the cradles of the automobile era that changed everyone's lives, and the birthplace of General Motors, which became the world's largest automotive concern and one of the world's largest

industrial empires (Gustin, 1976: 11).

Although the transition to and tremendous growth in automobile manufacturing may not have been predicted, Flint was already moving in that direction. Automobiles had been experimented with since the late 1800's in Europe and in some parts of the United States. As early as 1898, a Flint resident and Genesee County circuit judge, Charles Wisner, began building an automobile as a hobby (Gustin, 1976: 112). He is known to have built at least three cars but was never successful in getting them mass produced. Similarly, A.B.C. Handy established his Flint Automobile Company in 1901 in the plant used by the first carriage factory in Flint. Due to a lawsuit associated with a patent controversy, however, Hardy closed his business in 1903 (Lethbridge, 1976: 57). Meanwhile, David Buick had been experimenting with automobiles in Detroit and had organized his own company. Being an inventor rather than a salesman he was more interested in the invention than in marketing. Eventually, in September, 1903, the Buick Manufacturing Company was sold to James Whiting of the Flint Wagon Works (Lethbridge, 1976: 57). David Buick moved to Flint with the company. He acted as manager and inventor for awhile until Whiting convinced William Durant, the grandson of Henry Crapo and treasurer of the Durant-Dort Carriage Company, to help manage the Buick company. David Buick continued working on the technical aspects of the automobile while Durant acted as a director for the company.

Billy Durant was a superb salesman and promoter of the company. He successfully encouraged Charles Stewart Mott to move the Weston-Mott axle firm, which supplied axles and metal parts for Buick, from Utica, New York, to Flint in 1905. During that year "627 Buicks were built and Flint was on its way to becoming the home of Buick (Meister, 1971: 3)." By 1908 Buick had become the largest automobile manufacturing plant in the world. During that same year Durant convinced Albert Champion of Boston to relocate his spark plug business in Flint. Also, in September, 1908, Durant organized the General Motors Corporation "to encompass Buick, Weston-Mott, and Champion Ignition (which was to become A C Spark Plug) (Lethbridge, 1976: 59)."

The growth of this new automotive industry was accompanied by a significant growth in population:

In 1900 Flint's population was 13,103. Ten years later the city had 38,505, with most of this increase due to the expansion of Buick after 1905 (Meister, 1971: 9).

The city would continue to grow because of the automobile industry. The dramatic changes, which had not been foreseen at the time of the Golden Jubilee, were well underway. The status of the young General Motors Corporation was an indication of the changes:

On July 31, 1911, General Motors securities were listed on the New York Stock Exchange, the first automobile securities to be approved for listing on the exchange. The quaint and picturesque 'vehicle city' of carriages and livery stables, for decades secure in its small town atmosphere, was thrust into the noisy, booming world of industry (Lethbridge, 1976: 59).

The growing automobile industry brought with it the possibility of jobs. As more employment became available more people moved into Flint. "Between 1910 and 1920, the population grew from 38,500 to 91,600 (Gustin, 1976: 139)." The growth was so rapid that housing became a problem:

Tent cities and shanty towns sprang up on vacant lots and the river bank near factories. Even piano crates were adapted as places to stay. In 1913 Flint added seven square miles to its boundaries and built four new schools in the north end. . . . To assist workers, General Motors temporarily went into the housing business. A subsidiary called Modern Housing Corporation was assigned to build a subdivision on Flint's northwest side, away from the factories but easily accessible to them. The new subdivision was called Civic Park. Within a year about 1,000 affordable houses were ready for occupancy. The 1922 directory said that Flint ranked fourth in the nation in the number of one family dwellings, trailing New York City, Los Angeles, and Detroit (Lethbridge, 1976: 63).

This tremendous growth in jobs and population, along with the accompanying need for new housing, brought the realization that the automobile industry was likely going to be more than just a fleeting part of Flint's history. Another indication that it was here to stay was the fact that automobile plants were able to convert from "production of automobiles to defense weapons almost overnight, (Lethbridge, 1976: 83)" while still producing cars throughout the duration of World War I (1914-1918). Production and sales continued to grow even during the war.

Well beyond the end of World War I the population of Flint continued its upward spiral until later, "on the eve of the

Depression Flint was one of the largest industrial cities in the nation with 156,492 (Meister, 1971: 6)." The situation in Flint became glum:

Widespread unemployment caused by the decline in auto sales forced many families to seek public assistance. For the first time in memory, there were lines of people waiting for food. Relief agencies sprang into existence. . . . In working class neighborhoods, people kept up each other's spirits by holding house dances for which a fiddler was paid by passing the hat. Women who had never before taken in washing or worked as domestics took on such employment out of necessity (Lethbridge, 1976: 84).

Flint suffered greatly during the Depression but pulled through as conditions throughout the country began to improve. "The decade of the 1930's opened with the Depression, and ended with economic revival based on preparation for war (Schafer, 1989: 40)." Before that revival had begun, however, Flint had experienced conflict in the factories over working conditions and wages which culminated in the sit-down strike (December 30, 1936 - February 11, 1937). In the years following the strike the United Auto Workers "would work to achieve higher pay, shorter work days, safer working conditions, equality for minority workers, and an outstanding program of retirement benefits (Lethbridge, 1974: 187)." General Motors would also strive to keep production moving and people working. The corporation "pumped \$12 million into plant modernization and new tooling (Gustin, 1976: 87)" along with the introduction of new car models. "By 1940, Buick had reached a record of 310,000 sales (Gustin, 1976: 187)."

During the years of World War II (1939 - 1945) General Motors plants in Flint geared up for defense work once again. Among the items produced by Flint workers by the end of the war in 1945 were military trucks, armored vehicles, shells, cartridge cases, carbines, machine guns, canons, aircraft engines, planes, propellers, and diesel engines (Lethbridge, 1976: 88). Following the war factories swung back into the production of automobiles. Flint's focus and dependence on the automobile continued:

Clearly, the era of the horse had given way to the automobile age: when to 1950's auto maintenance related occupations are added all those engaged in automobile manufacture, the shift in the occupational profile of the area is seen to be overwhelming. By 1950 the Flint area's economy had become the product of the automobile, and the population of 270,963 had become dependent upon this particular form of transportation not only for its mobility, but also for its livelihood (Schafer, 1989: 37).

Dependence on the automobile industry in Flint has continued throughout the years since 1950 up to the present. If one were to read histories of the city, local newspapers, General Motors or union publications covering a variety of years from the 1950's to the present, it would not be difficult to find stories about the growth or decline in the automobile industry, or about leadership, workers, or union activity. Particularly today, it would be easy to find articles about the role of General Motors in the city of Flint, along with discussions about issues, such as down sizing of plants, outsourcing of jobs, and General Motors' responsibility to the community. Such ideas would have

been foreign to Jacob Smith and the other early settlers of the Flint area who experienced a frontier community and the lumbering industry. Perhaps they would have seemed strange to the early carriage makers as well. Such ideas and discussions have not been unusual, however, for the senior citizens who are the focus of this paper. Whether by birth or migration they came into Flint after its pioneer days had ended and its lumbering days had all but disappeared. They came either during the waning years of Flint's carriage making or during the early stages of the automobile industry. They experienced the growth of Flint from a somewhat rural community to its development as an industrial center for automobiles. They were already part of Flint's history prior to the city's great dependence on the automobile for transportation and prior to its dependence on automobile manufacturing for their livelihoods. The Seniors who share their stories in this paper all retired during the 1960's or early 1970's. Much of what they experience today, particularly in terms of retirement salary and benefits, is a consequence of the automobile industry and what had been established by the 1950's when Flint and General Motors had become nearly inseparable. Simply by looking at monuments of the automotive giants, such as the Durant Hotel, Mott Foundation Building, Whiting Auditorium, Buick City, and Sloan Museum, it is possible to get an indication of the lasting importance of the auto industry for the City of Flint. It can also help one to understand the significance of General Motors to the Seniors who are the subjects of this paper. G.M. and the City

of Flint have been intertwined for over eighty years. For my special seniors, General Motors and Flint are practically synonymous. This reality is evident in their life stories.

THE BIOGRAPHIESMILDRED LAVADA (GONYAW) SLY

Milly Sly was born Mildred Lavada Gonyaw on March 15, 1914, in Bay City, Michigan, the youngest of nine girls of Charles and Anna Gonyaw. There had been a brother, Joseph, born a few years prior to Milly's birth, but Joseph died at the age of three months. At the time of the interview Milly remembered living in the country on North St. in Bay City and going to church with her sisters at Visitation Catholic Church. She also vaguely remembered her father, Charles Gonyaw, who worked in the shipyards and was gone most of the time because he spent the last two years of his life hospitalized with a brain disorder that left him incapacitated. During that time Milly and her mother lived with Milly's sister, Julia, and her husband, Fred Petrimoulx. When her father died Milly was only eight years old, but she clearly recalled that, "In those days they used to bring dead persons home rather than take them to a funeral home. I can see my mother feeling real bad about it and crying."

After her father died Milly and her mother, Anna, moved to a different house and lived there with her sister Thelma (Mickey), who was single, and with another sister and brother-in-law, Cecelia and Fred Brill. Among the memories from that period of her life were activities, such as playing ball on the playground at Holy Trinity School in Bay City and watching her mother wash clothes by hand with an old washboard. Most of the time, however, Milly explained, "It was just my mother and I alone and I'd have to hurry home from school and stay

with her because she was sick much of the time." Only two years after the death of her father, when Milly was ten years old, her mother died. Following Anna's death Milly remained in Bay City but moved in with her sister and brother-in-law, Rose and Art Petrimoulx.

Three memories from her life with the Petrimoulx family were especially vivid in Milly's mind. The first was that Art used to haul coal in a truck and shovel it into people's basements through a window so they could burn it in their furnaces to generate heat for their homes. The second was the fond memory of Rose teaching her how to bake a cake when she was only ten years old. "I can remember her bedroom was right off the kitchen and she was in bed because she'd just had a baby. And I can remember they didn't even have a door in the bedroom, just curtains. I was running from the kitchen to the bedroom to get directions. My cake turned out all right anyway, and I've been bakin' ever since." The third memory Milly described this way: "I used to go along the tracks with a couple of Rose and Art's kids to pick up coal that had fallen off the trains and bring it home to use for fuel." Milly went on to explain that Rose and Art had a growing family and that times were not easy for them. That was one of the reasons another sister, Florence, who did not yet have children, invited Milly to move to Swartz Creek to live with her and her husband, Jack Ryan. [While still single Milly's sisters, Bernetta (Bert), Mickey, and Florence, who could not find work in Bay City, had moved to the Flint area to find work. Florence and Bert met

and married their husbands there]. Milly had two good years with Rose and Art, but they agreed to let her go with Florence. According to Milly, "That was one less mouth to feed."

Milly was twelve years old when she moved to Swartz Creek in 1926. While living there with Florence and Jack she attended sixth, seventh, and eighth grades "at a country school on Townline Road since called the Elms Road." At that time Florence did not work outside the home and Jack, who eventually found employment with General Motors, was out of work a lot. Consequently, "he was raising chickens and he would go around buying up poultry. Florence and I'd pick the feathers off the chickens. That was a stinking, smelly job. But that helped make a livin' during that time."

When Milly started ninth grade she began attending St. Matthew's Catholic School and would ride back and forth to school with Jack. In order to make things more convenient, Milly's sister and brother-in-law, Bert and Russell Jamieson, invited her to live with them at their home on Swayze St. in Flint. Milly accepted their invitation. She remained with them throughout her high school years and for another year afterwards until she got married.

During her years with Bert and Russell Milly worked different jobs to help pay her room and board and to provide a little personal spending money. She worked during the summers for a couple who paid her three dollars per week to take care of their child, do the laundry and other housework, and prepare meals. For about five or six months during her senior year

in high school Milly lived during the week with another couple who had no children. She prepared meals and cleaned house, once again for a wage of about three dollars per week. That arrangement was convenient because the Jamieson family had moved to a new location on Gratiot St. off Beecher Rd. farther from St. Matthew's School than their house on Swayze St. Performing domestic work allowed Milly to reside closer to school and cut the walking distance from the end of the streetcar line to her place of residence. Her employment with them was short lived, however, because "that was when times were hard, you know. It was during the Depression. They had me work as long as they could keep me. Then they said they couldn't afford to."

As was the case during her two years with Rose and Art in Bay City, Milly was the oldest in the Jamieson household, being about eight years older than Betty, the first born of the Jamieson children. Milly did her share of the work around the house to help Bert who "worked hard all of her life." Milly explained that Bert was a homemaker who cooked, cleaned, and made many of the kids' clothes. Even more, she learned to style women's hair and "took in alterations" to help earn money to care for the family. Milly related that Russell was a fireman with the Flint Fire Department and was handy at fixing things around the house. She remembered him as a patient man who was very good to her and also to her sister, Mickey, who lived with them for awhile as a young woman.

Milly graduated from St. Matthew's High School in 1933. She then worked at a variety of jobs until being employed as

a waitress at the Hamady lunch counter inside a Hamady grocery store in downtown Flint. She held that job for about a year until getting married at the age of twenty in 1934 to Ed Richert, a classmate from St. Matthew's School. Milly did not continue to work after marrying Ed because he preferred that she be a homemaker. "I didn't work out. I did everything around the house because I stayed home." The home she referred to was a house owned by Ed's father that was located on Beach St. in Flint. Milly and Ed's first two children, Shirley and John, were born during the years they lived there. They eventually attended St. Matthew's School. Also, during that time, Ed worked at the Chevrolet Motor Company. After a few years the Richert family moved to a new house on Brook St. in Flint where they were living when their third child, Patrick, was born in March, 1940.

Milly and Ed ran into marital difficulties and separated for about six months during 1941. Although Milly preferred not to say much about her marital situation during the interview, she did reveal that Ed had a drinking problem and was unable to properly support the family. Based on the need to provide security for her children Milly got a babysitter to watch the children at home on Brook St. while she went to work at the A.C. Spark Plug Division of General Motors located on Industrial Avenue in Flint. Milly indicated that the A.C. had always employed women, but it was World War II that actually allowed her to gain employment at the A.C.: "Probably I wouldn't have been able to get a job if they weren't hiring women like that.

Jobs weren't always plentiful until they had to have women go into the factory to take the men's places. Women went on defense." So did Milly. Anticipating the outbreak of war, the factories had already begun to manufacture military supplies when she hired into the shop in May, 1941.

Milly and Ed got back together but Ed was not happy working in the factory. He thought that a different kind of work would help resolve the problems they were facing in their marriage. So, Milly and Ed sold their house in 1942 and put the equity into a business, a gas station located at the corner of Twelfth St. and Fenton Rd. in Flint. They lived with the children in an apartment located above the gas station. During that time Milly took a leave of absence from the factory in order to have her tonsils removed. Ed suggested that she quit her job at the A.C. and become a full time homemaker again. Ed's drinking worsened, however, and he was unable to keep up with the responsibilities of the business. Milly was pumping gas and handling other aspects of the business as well. When her leave of absence ended she returned to work at the A.C. The business collapsed. She and Ed separated a second time.

When the creditors removed the furniture from their apartment Milly went to live again with her sister and brother-in-law, Bert and Russell, in July, 1943. It was not possible for the Jamiesons to take Milly's three children, however, because they were raising their own family. Consequently, Milly sent Shirley and John to Bay City to stay temporarily with her sister, Marie Gordon, a widow with four children, and her niece,

Thelma (Petrimoulx) Muncey, a married woman with two children. Marie and Thelma lived on opposite sides of a duplex house and were willing to work together to help care for Shirley and John. Pat remained in the Flint area but went to live with his Aunt Florence and Uncle Jack Ryan. Shirley and John remained in Bay City for about two months until Milly could place them in the Children's Home on Cedar St. in Flint in the fall of 1943. Milly wanted them to get proper care near her while she worked toward providing her own home for them. Later that fall when Florence, who had three children of her own, became ill with pneumonia, Milly was faced with finding care for Pat as well. "I asked them at the Home if they'd keep Pat, but they didn't want to at first because he was too young (three and one-half years). But then they said they would since Shirley and John were there." So the Children's Home took Pat also. Milly would spend several hours each night with the kids and would bring them home to Bert and Russell's on the weekends.

In late November of 1943 Russell died from heart disease which had plagued him for several years. Milly spoke with obvious emotion about Russell, his love for her and the kids, and how he had been like a father to her over the years. She explained that it became necessary for Bert to find employment in order to care for her family. Bert found work at the Chevrolet Motor Company. It was there that she became acquainted with Art Sly and recalled that Russell had known him for several years. Bert encouraged Art to meet her sister, Milly, and likewise, encouraged Milly to become acquainted with Art.

ARTHUR C. SLY

Art Sly was born Arthur Chester Sly on October 6, 1904, in the town of Engadine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the oldest of four boys born to Samuel and Edith Sly. For several years Art was not aware that he was the oldest son, however, because his mother's young half-brother, Ted Nelson, who was only about two and a half years older than Art, was being raised by Art's parents. When Edith and Ted's mother died, she and Sam had made room for Ted in their house. So, when Art was born in 1904 his "older brother" was already a permanent member of the family.

During the interview Art spoke of living his early childhood in Engadine and in Gould City, another small town nearby. He shared a vivid memory of his father: "Dad at that time was working out in the woods. He was an old lumberjack, you might as well say. I used to go to the mill and watch him with them spiked shoes roll around on them logs and take a pole with a sharp point on the front end and push the log up into the mill so it could be sawed up into lumber." Art went on to say that he recalled living for awhile in the woods about thirteen miles from the nearest neighbor, traveling by horse or on foot, and using kerosene lamps since there were no automobiles or electricity. "Everything was to help live. In other words, you had to cut wood. You split the wood. You carried it in the house. You filled the wood box. The women washed clothes in an old, I called it a copper bottom boiler on top of an old stove that burnt more wood than you could believe to keep that

thing going. It was my job to keep the wood in the house. I was always busy doing something."

In 1912 when Art was about seven years of age his family moved from the Upper Peninsula to the west side of the city of Flint at the urging of his dad's brother, Art, who already lived there and owned a meat market on Asylum St. "Uncle Art met us at the train depot to take us to his house up Kearsley St., and that was all mud and sawdust. It wasn't paved yet. Part of Flint downtown had bricks for a street. There was nothing like cement or pavement. It was all bricks. The rest of it was just mud and sawdust. And we got into his big sulkie, riding from the depot up to his house. The modern lights, I couldn't believe it. It was like riding with a king in that old sulkie. Of course, it was all trimmed up fancy. And he had a big barn and a big white horse. To me that was somethin' to come down and see big buildings and ride in a big carriage like that."

The Sly family had come to Flint because Art's uncle had suggested that his dad get a job in the factory, the Mason Motor Company, which eventually became Chevrolet Motor Division. Art's dad, Sam, however, took one look at the factory and declared that, if he had to work in a place with bars on the windows, he might just as well be in jail. So, instead, he worked his brother's forty-acre farm on Beecher Rd. and another forty-acre farm next door. Art remembered milking cows and helping with other chores. "Everything was to exist, I mean, men like my dad sailed the Great Lakes or did manual labor."

Working the farms was about a two year undertaking. Then, in 1913 Art's dad became the superintendent of Glenwood Cemetery on West Court St., a position he held for twenty-five years. Thus, Art lived in a home at Glenwood Cemetery from the age of nine until he was in his twenties.

Life at Glenwood Cemetery was a combination of happiness, sorrow, work, and play, but the general tenor of life in the Sly household was that of down to earth, practical, living. "Mother was really a housekeeper! With four boys and Dad pretty good eaters, she did the cooking. She did some shopping but Dad did most of it and he cooked breakfast lots of times. Mom always had a pot of soup or chicken cookin' and it was common for several of the guys to join us for Sunday dinner. If they didn't come around she would wonder where they were. She wasn't one to go to high society stuff. She was just a plain old fashioned gal." The pride Art holds for his parents was evident in his voice and expressions. Even in speaking of the hard work involved in cemetery care he gave no hint of complaining, but a rather matter of fact approach to the role he played there. Art spoke of taking a horse and a three wheel cart down the hill in the cemetery to a gravel pit where he helped load the cart with gravel and then drove it back up the hill to spread gravel on the road. He exclaimed that "everything was by hand, no machinery or nothin'." Art dug graves by hand and built fires in the winter time to thaw the ground before loosening it with a pick ax. In the warmer months he mowed the lawn with an old fashioned push mower; there were no electric or gas mowers

at the time. Art recalled manually grading and sodding a large portion of the cemetery, as well as clearing by hand the myrtle which had spread all over the graves. With regards to work at the cemetery Art spoke fondly about his dad, whom, he said, "Gave me a lot of responsibility, booted me in the behind when he thought I needed it, and was a good man to work for." To emphasize his admiration for his dad Art shared the advice that Sam had given him when he was working as a young man at the cemetery: "No matter who you're working for, I don't never want you to be afraid of your boss. If you do, you'll never get along nowhere." Art never forgot those words and carried them with him throughout his adult working years.

Art faced sorrows and hardships while living at Glenwood Cemetery. Two were quite vivid in his mind. The first took place when Art was eleven years old. It concerned his three year old brother, Leonard. Art's mother had gone north to visit her sister in the Upper Peninsula and had taken Leonard with her. While there, Leonard got sick. The doctor thought it was just a cold, but the child kept getting worse. Art wasn't sure if his dad was contacted by letter or telegraph, but it was not by phone since they did not yet have one. Sam traveled by train to reach his wife and son. The train took him onto a large ferry which crossed the Straights of Mackinac to the Upper Peninsula and then continued to its destination. When Sam reached Edith and Leonard he traveled either by horse or train to the city of Newberry where another doctor informed him that their only chance to save the child was to take him

to the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor. They boarded a train which took them onto the ferry for the journey back to the Lower Peninsula. But Leonard didn't make it. He died from congestion of the bowel while still on the ferry. "That's the one thing that really shook us, when we lost our brother, Leonard. That's when dad bought the lots in the cemetery. Leonard was the first one of the family to be buried in the plot. And I was the guy who helped dig his grave." That's just part of living, you know," Art explained as he got choked up, "that's the way it goes, the good with the bad. You never know why things happen."

The second sad event, although not devastating for the Sly family, occurred when Art was in high school. In 1920 or so there was a flu epidemic from which "people died all over the country. We were stretched out on beds and cots. The doctor came out to the house." (Art mentioned this event because of the seriousness of the epidemic and his recollection of being so sick. I have included it because I found it fascinating that the doctor would go to their house to treat them for the illness.)

Art's elementary education began first at the Graham School, a one room country school, and then at Hazelton School located on Hazelton St. on Flint's near west side. From there he went to the old Flint Central High School located near St. Matthew's Catholic School in downtown Flint. During those childhood years Art enjoyed ice skating, sledding, baseball, basketball, soccer, and football as his primary recreational activities. He also

remembered fishing a lot and going to the show for a nickel. School was actually a secondary interest because Art was more interested in sports than school. One day during his junior year in high school Art skipped classes but played in a football game that night. One of his teachers discovered what he had done and required him to stay after school for a designated number of weeks thereby keeping him from participating in sports. A disagreement arose after Art had served what he thought was the specified number of weeks, but the teacher thought a longer time had been determined. Continued detention would have kept Art from playing basketball for the school team. He wanted no part of that agreement. Art quit school then and followed his dad's exhortation that it was his decision, but if he quit he would have to go to work. "I worked from then on," he emphasized.

Much of Art's work was at the cemetery until he found employment as a young man at the Buick Motor Company. He worked at Buick for three years but quit because he had been promised a raise several times and never received it. He left to find work elsewhere. It happened that because of his athletic ability Art got a break. A friend told him that the Chevrolet Motor Company had a baseball team and was looking for a pitcher. Art contacted the people involved at Chevrolet, was hired as an employee, and played on their team.

During this time Art lived at home as did his brothers. "All of us boys stayed at home until, well, Ted worked in Detroit in a factory for awhile and was gone. He was older. But he'd

always come back on weekends anytime he could and bring his buddies with him. Then Sam (fourteen months younger than Art) married young and moved to Lapeer. Oral (ten years younger than Art) and I were still there." Art remembered those years of young adulthood as a time of work, baseball, and especially music. His brother, Ted, played the piano and the violin and formed a band called "Ted Nelson's Melody Boys." Art learned to play the drums, although he could not read music. He had a natural sense of rhythm and timing. Consequently, he was able to play with Ted's Melody Boys at Mechanics Hall on the corner of Court and Saginaw streets, during intermission at the Regent Theater on Detroit St., and at a dance hall in North Lake, Michigan, near Otisville and Otter Lake, Michigan. He spoke with delight at having had the chance to play as a fill-in for a couple of weeks with a group popular at the time called "Nick and the Cornhuskers." With both bands he remembered playing the fox trot, the two step, Dixieland, and square dance tunes. Entertainment in those days, according to Art, often took place in homes as well. "People would bring banjos, horns, drums, whatever, and have house parties. They would get together, clear furniture out of a room, and have a dance. Square dances were big then."

Art married Vivian LaBarr in 1927 when he was twenty-three years of age. For a short while they lived with his folks at Glenwood Cemetery. At the time Art was making forty-three cents per hour at the Chevrolet and occasionally earned a bonus check. He explained, "If you got, say, maybe five percent over

production you got a bonus." Before long, Art and Vivian moved to a house at 2911 Berkely St. For awhile she worked as a waitress but eventually, after the children, Joyce and Sonny, were born, she stayed home to care for them and to do most of the housework. Art talked about how things were in those days and explained that the kids were born at home rather than in a hospital. He clearly remembered being present for the birth of his two oldest children. He also recalled that since they did not own a car he walked to and from work everyday.

According to Art, work was not always consistent during the late twenties and early thirties. "Two or three times a year you'd get laid off. If you got laid off you didn't get nothin'. In those days there was no unemployment." People struggled to "make ends meet" and survived only by helping each other. Art enjoyed helping the neighbors and welcomed them to fill their pails in the deep well that he was fortunate to have at his house. He spoke knowingly of the Great Depression and how people got by. "Back in them days it was tough. I was one of the lucky ones. I worked a couple days a week. I could buy a soup bone, come home and boil it up, cut up a little. My neighbors would have a garden in the summer. They'd bring over everything--potatoes and carrots. We'd have a real Mulligan Stew, a feast! We had a big iron kettle. About a half dozen neighbors would get together. For two bits I could buy a steak. We never starved. We helped each other survive. At that time, when I was workin' two days a week, I'd play drums at night to make a little extra money."

Although Art felt fortunate to have good neighbors and a job that allowed him to share what he had, he did not look at factory work through rose colored glasses. It was hard work where there were belt driven machines without electricity to power them. No hoists were available, so workers had to lift supplies by hand onto conveyor belts, and machinery was sometimes dangerous. "Automation was not in during my first fifteen years or so. There was not much safety--no guards on machines. We called plant ten 'the slaughterhouse.' Fingers were cut off in presses and a lot of injuries happened. Later, by the time I retired in 1965 machines were pretty well guarded, but during those early days it was dangerous."

It was during Art's first fifteen years in the factory that the Sit Down Strike of 1936-1937 occurred. Art spoke of workers wanting a union and of how they pretended to sit down at plant nine on Asylum St. in order to create a camouflage so the real strike could take place in plant four on Chevrolet Ave. Art worked in plant five at the time and, therefore, was not actually sitting down as were the workers in plant four. At the request of his brother-in-law who worked at the Fisher Body plant on South Saginaw St., however, Art drove his car to a designated location, got the car filled with food, and delivered it to the South Saginaw St. plant where those workers were also sitting down. Looking back on those days, Art recalled the "Battle of Bull Run" on Chevrolet Ave. near plant two where police cars were overturned and hinges were thrown out of the factory windows. He also remembered incidents at plant nine

where workers were getting beat up. Reflecting on the strike, Art declared, "It wasn't funny. It was like a war, really. It wasn't an easy decision to sit on company property, but the men felt they had a right to protect their jobs." In further reflections Art spoke of his respect for Governor Murphy who sent in the National Guards. In his opinion, that action kept General Motors from bringing in thugs from out of town to use violent means to force the workers out of the factory. Overall, even though Art was aware of later violence between rival unions, he views the strike and the development of unions as beneficial because they helped guarantee job security and improved working conditions.

By the time the United States entered World War I in 1941 Art and Vivian had experienced marital problems and had divorced. Joyce and Sonny lived with Vivian who got married again and moved out of state. Art was drafted for military service in 1942, but due to an ulcer on his eye discovered during the military physical, he was deferred for thirty days and told to report to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, when the thirty days had expired. Art explained what happened next: "When only ten days were left, The Flint Journal came out with the headlines, 'Anyone 38 Years Or Older Won't Go!' Art's military days ended before they could get into full swing.

Luckily, Art had not quit his job at Chevrolet. A set-up man there was planning to leave for a job as a government inspector. He recommended Art for his position. The foreman offered it to Art. He accepted it and was involved in making

valves and other equipment for airplanes. A problem had developed with the valves that caused them to crack and to be discarded. Art became aware of the problem and figured out a way to keep them from cracking. He believed that his discovery was one of the reasons he was later promoted to the position of foreman which he held for approximately twenty years until his retirement.

It was during the war years that Art met a woman named Bernetta Jamieson. She found work in the factory after her husband had died and she needed employment to care for her family. In talking with Bert Art realized that he had known her husband, Russell, for several years as a fireman who spoke with him whenever he passed by the firehouse on his way to play ball. As they became better acquainted Bert mentioned that she had a sister, Mildred, whom she thought Art should meet. She told him that he didn't know what he was missing. Still feeling some bitterness over his earlier marital difficulties and divorce, Art was not inclined to pursue this suggestion. Eventually however, Bert did manage to introduce them, and it didn't take Art long to realize that he hadn't known what he was missing.

ART AND MILLY SLY

Bernetta Jamieson had been successful in introducing her sister, Milly, to Art Sly in May, 1944, but Art and Milly did not begin dating immediately. It was not until early 1945, when Milly's divorce became final, that they began to see each other regularly. Milly was still living with Bert, her children were living in the Children's Home, and Art was living in a rooming house. Both Art and Milly were attempting to deal with feelings related to their divorces, to set new goals, and to move on with their lives. Then, late in 1945 the Children's Home began to pressure Milly to make a home for her children or put them up for adoption. Art's response to that pressure was, "Forget adoption. Let's get married." After much discussion Art and Milly got married on February 23, 1946. Since most of Milly's money was being spent to support her children, and Art had been paying alimony, they began married life with his paycheck and ten dollars he had given her for Valentine's Day.

For a couple of weeks Art continued to live in the rooming house while Milly continued to live with Bert. In their spare time they looked for a place to rent. Milly reflected, "At that time you might as well as had a rare disease as to tell anybody you had children because they didn't want no children anyplace you wanted to rent." So, Art and Milly rented an apartment on Hazelton St. where the children could visit and stay on weekends but were not allowed to live permanently. After several months of searching they finally found a place

where they could keep the children with them. They lived there only about two or three weeks because, according to both of them, "It was a dump." Fortunately Milly had written a letter inquiring about an apartment which had been listed in the want ad section of The Flint Journal. They received a response from the owner, met with her at the apartment, and discovered that she welcomed children. Shortly afterwards they moved into the lower level of the nice duplex house located on Illinois Avenue on the east side of Flint.

Art and Milly lived on Illinois Ave. with Shirley, John, and Pat for about fourteen months. During that time the children attended St. Mary's Catholic School on N. Franklin Ave. Also, Art's daughter, Joyce, who was about sixteen years of age, came to live with them from November, 1946, until the summer of 1947, but returned then to Cleveland, Ohio, where her mother had settled. Not long after Joyce left, Art's dad, Sam, came to visit. He and Art's mother, Edith, had moved to the Upper Peninsula a year or so prior to the visit to help Art's brother and sister-in-law, Oral and Ina, run a restaurant and gas station. But shortly after moving there Edith had gone into the hospital for gall bladder surgery. Cancer was discovered, and she died within a few months in November, 1946. When Sam came to visit in the summer of 1947 he had not given any advance notice that he was coming. Milly recalled that "a knock came at the door, and I went to see who it was. I said, 'Well Dad, what are you doing here?' And he said, 'Oh, I thought I'd come and see you.' And then I asked, 'How long you gonna stay?'

And he said, "Forever, if you'll let me." And I said, 'Well, sure, if you want to stay.'" So, Sam had found a new home too.

By the fall of 1947 Milly was expecting a child. It was time to begin looking for a permanent house. The search began. By May, 1948, Milly and Art had put a down payment on an old three bedroom house at 917 Walnut St. near Kearsley Park on Flint's east side. Milly and the new baby, Leonard, came home from the hospital to the house which Art, the other children, and Sam had moved into while Milly was in the hospital. Art reminisced: "We liked 917. Dad had a garden out there on the side. There was enough room for the kids to run around and play ball. It was home." When they first moved to 917 Walnut St. Art worked second shift at the Chevrolet while Milly remained home on maternity leave. Milly recalled that Art's dad encouraged her to quit work and stay home: "Art knew you had three kids when he married you. He'll take care of you." But Milly did not expect Art to carry the full responsibility of financial support for the family. After three months of maternity leave Milly went back to her first shift job at the A.C. Spark Plug. Art's dad helped with the kids and the garden. Milly did most of the housework, laundry, cooking, and baking. Art mowed the lawn, shovelled the snow, and did minor repairs. The kids all helped as well, although their responsibilities were not determined until some discussion had taken place. Art originally thought the boys should not have to do housework, but Milly believed they should know how to take care of a house and ought to share the work load. Since no farm chores or heavy

manual labor were needed, all the kids learned how to do dishes, scrub floors, and pitch in with whatever was necessary around the house.

There were struggles in raising the children and providing for their needs. For several years they did not own a car. Consequently, Art often walked the three miles to the Chevrolet and back, the kids walked about two and a half to three miles to St. Mary's School or rode the city bus, and Milly found rides to the A.C. and back with co-workers. There were the normal rivalries and the arguments about who was supposed to take care of what jobs around the house or about someone borrowing the belongings of another family member. There were times when the children got into trouble with BB guns or created extra work for their parents. Art recalls that, "I had just finished replacing a window that was broken by the kids while they were playing baseball. The putty wasn't even dry when the ball came crashing through the new window." Needless to say, Art was not happy about the situation. Yet, he and Milly look back with fondness on those days of raising the children. Art summed up his and Milly's feelings: "It wasn't so much the kids giving us trouble. It was more the expense. But two or three more at the table never bothered us." He went on to explain that, "Milly can remember more of the younger days of the kids than I can--workin' nights, sleepin' days--I didn't get a chance to do much with Leonard or Rick, our youngest kids. I did get to play a little ball with John and Pat." Work schedules did not always allow Art and Milly to spend a lot of time together

or with the children, but they somehow managed to give each other and the children the time they needed. They worked through scheduling problems and the hectic day to day events to create a home for each other and the children. They also enjoyed the company of extended family members and friends as well.

Except for the few months that Joyce lived on Illinois Ave. with Art and Milly she remained in Ohio near her mother and eventually got married there. She now lives in Pennsylvania with her husband, Ken, and has grown children and grandchildren. Likewise, Sonny remained in Ohio with Vivian. He and his wife, Jean, have grown children and grandchildren. Shirley lived with Art and Milly until entering the convent in 1952 to become a Sister of St. Joseph in Nazareth, Michigan, near Kalamazoo. Being homesick, however, she came back home a year or so later and stayed for a few months before getting an apartment and then eventually returning to the convent and taking vows to become a nun. Art's dad, Sam, remained with the family until his death from pneumonia in February, 1953. John quit high school in the mid 1950's and went into the army. He returned home for awhile after completing his years of service. Eventually he got married and had a daughter who is now grown and has children of her own. Pat graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1957 and remained for a few years except for a six month period in the army reserves. He eventually moved out, married, and has two grown daughters with children of their own. Leonard lived with Art and Milly until graduation from St. Mary's in 1966. He graduated from college in 1970, found

employment in Lansing for a few years, returned to Flint in 1978, married Andrea Bartosz in 1981 and has four sons. Rick, Art and Milly's youngest son, who was born in July, 1954, attended St. Mary's School through tenth grade and graduated in 1972 from Powers Catholic High School. He married within a year of graduation. He and his wife, Debbie, lived at 917 Walnut St. with Art and Milly for several months during their first year of marriage until they could afford to move out on their own. They have three grown children and one grandchild.

As Art and Milly thought back over the years at 917 Walnut St. they recalled highlights, such as birthdays, holiday celebrations, and other family gatherings. They spoke of Milly's Gonyaw Reunion which began at Rose and Art Petrimoulx' farm in Kawkawlin, Michigan, near Bay City in 1950 and has taken place every year in various locations, particularly Meyers Lake near Linden, Michigan, for forty-six years. They reminisced about visits from out of town relatives, Art's brothers and Milly's sisters who have all died, and of their son, John, who died tragically in 1976. They spoke of their commitment to each other, their love for all of their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren who bring them much joy. They talked of happy memories of the twenty-seven years at 917 Walnut St. and of their satisfaction that "the door was always open" to family and friends. They expressed contentment with life, as Art put it, in their "little tin box," their mobile home in Davison, Michigan, where they have lived since 1972.

Art retired from the Chevrolet in 1965 after thirty-eight

years of service to General Motors. Milly retired from the A.C. in 1971 after thirty years of service. As in the past they continue to keep their door open. They celebrate special occasions, enjoy having company, and keep up with the happenings of their family and friends. Retirement has not altered their lifestyle much except that they enjoy going out to eat more frequently than when they were employed and Art has taken on more of the domestic chores around the house. It is common for him to cook breakfast or dinner, vacuum, or help Milly with her baking. During these retirement years they have remained close to their children and enjoy caring for the grandchildren when possible. They also returned the care that Milly's sisters gave her when she was younger by caring for them as they grew older and had special needs. At different times they took in one sister or another who was ill, ran errands, did laundry, and handled business affairs for them when necessary. Until a couple of years ago Art and Milly were bowling on a weekly senior citizens' league. They continue to attend weddings, funerals, and graduations. Although physical ailments have made them less mobile during the past year, Art still enjoys fishing, occasional trips to the horse races, and many televised sporting events. Milly remains somewhat active in church related functions, goes shopping frequently with her daughter, Shirley, and enjoys afternoon soap operas. Art and Milly celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in February, 1996, at a dinner and dance party with relatives and friends. When asked about the success of their marriage Art replied, "Milly and I didn't

lie to each other." They made a commitment and have supported each other throughout the years. Through Milly's many surgeries over the years, times of limited financial resources and several mouths to feed, and all the good times, they talked, shared responsibilities, and kept a positive outlook. Both expressed their thankfulness for good jobs and the accompanying benefits. Neither expressed regrets at having worked so many years. Milly reflected that "some people complained about the jobs and how they hated them. I never really did. I made the most of it and enjoyed the people I worked with." Art commented similarly: "I liked it or I wouldn't have stayed there, to tell you the truth. I liked factory work. It was means of survival, put it that way, and I made more money by being on supervision. But actually, I enjoyed runnin' grinders, workin'. I enjoyed production. It wasn't a bed of roses, all of it, but I did like factory work, and it paid good money." All in all, Art and Milly Sly consider their lives happy and fulfilled. Their thoughts and feelings are not based on ignorance of challenges or suffering because they have faced many struggles, heartaches, and disappointments. But they have attempted to keep a positive outlook throughout their lives. Art revealed their basic approach to life in this piece of advice he offers all of us: "Do the best you can with what you got. Be happy."

MABEL CAROLINE (ALBRECHT) SLY

Mabel Sly was born Mabel Caroline Albrecht on December 2, 1905, in Lapeer, Michigan, the youngest of five children and the only daughter of Paul and Diana Albrecht. Because her two oldest brothers were several years older than Mabel they had moved out of the house by the time she was growing up. During Mabel's growing years her household was comprised of her mother and father, her third and fourth brothers, and an uncle, her dad's bachelor brother who was physically handicapped.

One of Mabel's earliest memories was beginning school at the age of five years. She recalled walking a mile and a half to school for several years because her family did not own a car. In fact, for several years there was no electricity in her home and heat was generated by a coal stove. Mabel remembered hard winters with heavy snowfalls: "I had a cousin and we'd ride a sleigh way out into the country to enjoy the snow." Mabel also remembered her dad, who was employed at the Lapeer State Home as a member of the maintenance staff, carrying a lunch pail to and from work. "I always got into his lunch pail to see what was left for me. Dad always had something I could find in that pail." Mabel also recalled that her mother never worked outside the home. She washed clothes with a washboard and hung them on the line to dry, worked a lot in the kitchen, and "was happiest when she could see the kids playin' and havin' a good time." Mabel enjoyed the time she spent with her parents and remembered that "Dad bought a horse and buggy when I was about thirteen, and Ma and I would take

it to the store." Eventually, she explained, "We got a 1923 Dodge, and I drove it to school the last couple of years."

Mabel spoke fondly of her family and of happy times while growing up. She enjoyed having her uncle in the household and remembered him as a "nice guy." Mabel felt that she never had a lot of responsibility around the house but was expected to help with some of the housework. In terms of recreational activities, Mabel especially recalled playing cards. "I grew up playing cards, Euchre and Pedro. We'd have card parties around the neighborhood even when I was smaller. That was fun, too. Even after we got married neighbors did that." Another recreational activity that was a big part of her life was dancing. Mabel remembered going out to dances frequently, particularly to a dance hall in North Lake, Michigan, near Otisville and Otter Lake, Michigan. But recreation was not the only activity to occupy her time. Mabel quit school after completing the eleventh grade and went to work at McClelland's Dimestore which was located in the main business section of downtown Lapeer. Mabel enjoyed having her own cash register and visiting with the customers. She continued to live at home with her family during those working years and began to date Sam Sly from Flint.

SAMUEL HARLAND SLY

Sam Sly was born Samuel Harland Sly on February 27, 1906, in Engadine, Michigan. Sam was the second of four sons born to Samuel and Edith Sly. He was fourteen months younger than the first born child, Art. Since Sam's Uncle Ted, his mother's young half brother, was also being raised by his parents, however, Sam was actually the third child living in the Sly household.

Sam lived in Engadine and Gould City as a small child. His mother was home with the children while his father worked as a lumberjack in the forests of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Among Sam's memories of life in the U.P. were the following: walking on wooden sidewalks, traveling long distances either by horse and buggy or by train, and the times of playing with his brothers, particularly the time that Art got hung up in the crotch of a tree by his neck and "all the women come a screechin' over there and got him out." An especially vivid memory concerned his dad who would come home from the lumber camps, take him along to the local hotel, and place him at the end of the bar while he played the slot machines or visited with other men from the town. Occasionally Sam's dad would give him some beer in a one ounce whiskey glass. This practice made Sam's move from the Upper Peninsula to Flint a memorable event. "When we were moving down to Flint we had to change trains at Trout Lake Junction. I seen the bar in the restaurant there. Ma was gettin' dinner for Art, Ted, and me. I wanted a nickel beer, but Ted shut me up. I was bound I was gonna have a beer

with my dinner but I didn't get it. Ma wouldn't let me have it." Sam grinned as he related this story and recalled his move to a new city.

The Slys arrived in Flint in March, 1912. Sam reminisced: "We got into Flint and got off the train downtown and Uncle Art had a team of bays on a two seated sulkie with a fringe on top and all the arch lights over Saginaw Street, boy that was something!" Sam related that his uncle had purposely taken a longer route home than necessary just so the new arrivals could get a glimpse of Saginaw Street and the city they would call home. Then Sam's Uncle Art took them to his house on Asylum Street. Gradually the Slys became familiar with Flint and moved to a farm on Beecher Rd. owned by Sam's uncle. Sam's dad began tending the farm as well as another next door. While living there Sam helped gather eggs produced by the farmers' hens. He also had responsibility for feeding the chickens and did it without the benefit of modern machinery. "We provided feed for about eighty-five chickens by rubbing two ears of corn at a time together to remove corn from the cob."

In 1913 the Sly family moved to a house at Glenwood Cemetery on West Court Street where Sam's dad became the superintendent. Sam remembered that there was all open land around Glenwood Cemetery even when he began high school several years later. Because one of his jobs was to gather wood he also remembered heating their home with a wood stove and only "much later with a coal furnace." He recalled further that the house had no electricity when they first moved there and believed that "we

were the last ones in Flint to have electricity." Sam pictured his dad as "a hard worker always doing something" and his mother as the keeper of the house. "Ma done all the housework, everything except she made me dry dishes. And every spring those carpets had to hang out on the clotheslines, and we'd beat them with carpet beaters."

Sam revealed several memorable events from his life at Glenwood Cemetery. The first was the death of his three year old brother, Leonard, when Sam was ten years old. Sam had made the journey to the Upper Peninsula with his mother and Leonard to visit relatives. Sam related the events just as Art had in his interview. Leonard took ill, Sam's dad went to the U.P. to be with his sick child, and the doctors referred the family to the University of Michigan Hospital for treatment, but Leonard never made it to Ann Arbor. Sam explained: "I was about ten when my brother, Leonard, died. I was holding him when he died."

A second memorable event took place when Sam was twelve years old. He was kicked in the face by a horse that was used to pull a wagon for hauling materials at the cemetery. His nose was broken and his teeth knocked out. He spent three days in the hospital and was laid up at home for several weeks with his jaws wired to promote proper healing. A third event happened when Sam was about thirteen years old. He farmed out during school vacation for six weeks. He lived out about a mile and a half from home on West Court St. and earned fifty cents per day. During that time Sam helped drive about forty-five head

of cattle from the farm west of Flint to the Crapo farm located in the southeast corner of Flint, about eight miles or so. Sam recalled that "We put a rope on a bell cow (a cow with a bell on its collar) and led her. The rest of the cows followed." A fourth event occurred when Sam was sixteen years of age. He hired in at Fisher Body #2 on Chevrolet Avenue to carry water for the men since there was no drinking water in the factory then. Finally, Sam remembered his years of schooling. It had begun at the Graham School on Beecher Rd. when the Sly family lived on the farm. It continued at Hazelton School on Hazelton Street near West Court Street when he lived at Glenwood Cemetery. Eventually he would attend the old Central High School in downtown Flint. Because Sam had been required to take second grade and part of the eighth grade over again he was already sixteen years of age when he quit school in the ninth grade.

While reflecting on his childhood years at Glenwood Cemetery Sam offered this evaluation: "Oh, we were poor, and when you wanted to go to the show, it cost a nickel and you walked the two miles down there. I done that a lot of weekends. But it was a happy life growing up. We played basketball. We played football. We played baseball. If we wanted to go swimmin', we'd go swimmin'. We went ice skating. No, as kids growing up, I think we had a happy time, a good happy time."

SAM AND MABEL SLY

Sam Sly and Mabel Albrecht were still teenagers when they began dating. In fact, when they married on February 13, 1926 Mabel had just turned twenty in December. Sam would turn twenty years of age two weeks after their wedding. For the first six months or so they lived with Sam's parents at Glenwood Cemetery. Then they moved to Lapeer to live with Mabel's parents and her uncle at the home in which she had grown up, her dad's original childhood family home on Old Saginaw Street. Living with her parents and uncle proved to be a positive situation not only for Mabel and Sam but also for Mabel's parents. They would continue to live together for several years in that location and would all move together into a different home on Hartley Street in Lapeer in 1932.

During their early years of marriage Mabel did not work outside the home. She did not begin her employment until many years later after she had become a grandmother. Sam, on the other hand, worked outside the home all during their early years of marriage. Because work was not always consistent, however, Sam worked in several factories including Chevrolet, Lapeer Trailer Company, Buick, Fisher Body, and once again, the Buick where he worked for thirty and one-half years from 1935 until his retirement in 1966 at sixty years of age. During those early years of marriage Sam also worked several summers for his dad at Glenwood Cemetery when work was not available in the factory. He was at the point of considering long term employment at the cemetery when he obtained a stable position

at the Buick in 1935.

Recreation for Sam and Mabel was an outgrowth of the activities they had experienced during their childhood years and during their time of dating. Dancing and card playing brought much enjoyment to their lives. Sam explained that "In this neighborhood (Hartley St.) in the thirties we'd have Pedro parties. Anybody old enough to play, he played and we'd tear the furniture out of a couple of rooms and have square dances." Sam and Mabel both talked about "house parties" and the family orientation of recreation. They agreed, as Sam put it, that "it was family deals in them days, not kids here and folks there. We were together. Kids learned right along with the grownups. We did it in Flint when we were kids. Hell, I was about twelve years old when I learned to waltz and square dance. The whole family went, the whole kaboodle, babies and all. That's when we had good times. We enjoyed it because we worked hard all week." The enjoyment Sam spoke of was not confined to "house parties," however. He and Mabel would go dancing frequently during their courtship and after they were married. They danced particularly at a dance hall in North Lake, Michigan. They also danced at a township hall in Hunter's Creek near Lapeer. Mabel explained: "When we were first goin' out to Hunter's Creek, it was Aunt Ellie and Uncle Fred that put them on. He played an accordion." Sam explained further: "Somebody'd take turns playin' the piano and Ted used to come over and play the violin once in awhile. It wasn't a money-makin' deal. It was just friends and relatives getting together to have fun. Sure, and

lunch or supper--everybody'd take somethin' so there'd be a lot to eat. We'd take up a collection to pay for it. Nobody made any money. We'd even do that when we had house parties."

Dancing and card playing were only one facet of Sam and Mabel's early married life. Suffering and sorrow made itself felt at times as well. Sam spoke with tears in his eyes about losing their first child when Mabel was about eight months pregnant. He lamented, "I buried my boy. I wrapped him up in a little box and buried him in the apple orchard at Mabel's folks' place." Sam and Mabel went on to tell of the birth of their daughter, Peggy, at home about a year and a half later in March, 1929. It was a happy occasion but a tense situation for awhile. Sam explained, "Mabel hemorrhaged, and I was poundin' the hell out of her heart." Mabel added, "Well, I ended up in the hospital. I might just as well have been there in the first place. The doctor came into my room and said, 'Mabel, now no more.'" But Sam and Mabel wanted more children. She became pregnant again. They lost their second son when Mabel was six months along. Mabel remarked, "I went to the hospital that time. No fooling around that time." There were no more children after that experience.

Sam and Mabel took pride in their daughter, Peggy. So did Mabel's parents. Each cared for Peggy in his or her own way and enjoyed having her in the family. In response to a question about who changed the diapers, Mabel said with a hearty laugh, "Now you're kidding me. Well, I tell you, for the first while Mom took care of that because she enjoyed doing it and

it was awhile before I got into it. Then to Sam she commented, "I don't think you ever changed 'em, did ya?" Sam responded, "Twice. Then she wet on me while I was doing it. That was the end of that." Thus, Mabel or her mother took care of the diapers. But Sam enjoyed Peg in other ways. He began taking her small game hunting when she was four years of age and deer hunting when she was fourteen. Several years later, after Peggy had married, given birth to three children, divorced, and was living in a house on Hartley St. next door to her parents and grandparents, Sam and Mabel moved in with Peggy to help with her children and to pay her house payments. They remained with her from December, 1949, until early 1952. Then they continued to make house payments for Peggy for another year and a half.

Sam and Mabel's life with her parents seemed to be mutually beneficial. The Albrechts had taken them in when they were in their first year of marriage in 1926 and had helped care for Peggy after her birth in 1929. By the time they moved to Hartley St. in 1932 Sam and Mabel were able to make the house payments for her parents. Life was not always easy, but as Sam explains, they managed: "We had her folks, her crippled uncle, us raising Peg, and for awhile during our early years of marriage her folks had two grandchildren they were raising--her oldest brothers' two boys, one brother divorced, the other one died--We ain't kickin'. It's water under the dam, that's all. The only trouble was, that didn't leave me loose to take care of my folks. We had all we could take care of right here. Oh, I don't know. We got by somehow."

Sam and Mabel's efforts paid off in the emotional bonds established among family members. Although they did not become rich, it paid off somewhat financially as well. During the 1940's the house was put into Sam and Mabel's names. As a result they had established enough equity to help them in 1967 purchase a comfortable ranch style home located at 97 Hartley St. only two doors from the older, larger, and less modern home they had lived in since 1932. They enjoyed retirement together in that home and were living there when this interview took place.

Both Sam and Mabel experienced the death of loved ones throughout the years. One of Mabel's brothers had died from a lung abcess when Mabel was in her twenties. Her uncle died in 1933. Her mother died in 1956 while in her seventies and her father in 1963 at the age of ninety-two. Sam's mother died in 1946 at the age of sixty-three, his dad in 1953 at the age of eighty-three, his brother, Oral, in 1964 at the age of forty-nine, and his brother-uncle, Ted, in 1971 at the age of sixty-nine. The death that had the most significant impact on them in later years, however, was the death from cancer of their daughter, Peggy, in 1982 at the age of fifty-three. Both expressed how much they missed her and what fond memories they had of her. Both also emphasized, however, how much joy their grandchildren and great grandchildren brought to their lives and how much affection they had for them.

Both Sam and Mabel shared satisfaction with their years of work outside the home and their amazement at how quickly the years of retirement flew by. Mabel began working at the

Lapeer State Home at forty-three years of age and retired seventeen years later at age sixty. Mabel offered these reflections: "When I first went out there they put me in a building with older women. It was kind of drab and not much movement around. Then I requested work in '34,' people who didn't know anything. They were out of it. I liked workin' with the patients. Some of 'em were pretty rough, but I got along. I kinda enjoyed workin' there." Mabel went on to say that, "I coulda went up to be a supervisor but I didn't want no supervisor job--sit there on your rear end all day. No!" Mabel was contented with her work and the resulting retirement: "I get my pay every month and I enjoyed the work." Sam expressed similar feelings about factory work. He spoke of being a laborer and of being on supervision for awhile. At the time of this interview he expressed satisfaction with factory work and the resulting pension: "Look what I got, a pension, and I haven't worked in twenty-four years. I retired yesterday, and that was twenty-four years ago."

In some ways life changed for Sam and Mabel during the latter part of their retirement. For most of their married years Mabel did the cooking, cleaning, and other household chores. Sam took care of the lawn work and other maintenance needs. Both, however, developed some physical problems over the years. Consequently, their lifestyles were altered. Eventually Sam was not able to care for the lawn because of a "bad" back and because of some heart problems. Mabel limited her housework due to several heart attacks and the corresponding

exhaustion that made it difficult to do what she once did. Sam took over some of the kitchen responsibilities in an effort to ease Mabel's work. He made the following observation: "The last couple of years or so I've messed around with the cooking and found out I can burn a steak just as well as anybody." Sam also explained that they were participating in some government programs which help senior citizens. They had someone come to their house one day per week to help with the cleaning and personal needs, and to take their blood pressure. They also had one meal per day delivered to their house to help ensure that they were getting balanced meals and to ease their workload. Sam mentioned proudly that he and Mabel had been married for nearly sixty-five years and offered his viewpoint on their situation: "Now they've got us on that program to keep us home, and I don't know how much longer we'll be home if our minds get any worse, our memories. Then they'll have to do something else with us. I don't care, I guess, as long as we're together." Mabel added a few statements that helped sum up their lives together: "Well, all through our ups and downs we've come through it," "I go to God a lot, everyday," and "I've tried to live a good clean life. That's about the best anyone can do."

(Note: Sam died in April, 1993 at eighty-seven years of age. Shortly afterwards, Mabel moved to Wolverine, Michigan, to live with her granddaughter, Kathy, and her family. She received good care and companionship until her death in 1995 at the age of eighty-nine).

EMMA M. (ZOVISHLACK) VREELAND

Emma Vreeland was born Emma M. Zovishlack on December 12, 1914, in Zilwaukee, Michigan, the oldest of four children born to Peter and Susan Zovishlack. Emma was only three years old when her family moved to the Flint area. Consequently, Emma doesn't recall much about living in Zilwaukee. Most of her childhood memories center around life in the Flint area, visits to her grandparents' home in Omer, Michigan, and visits to other relatives and friends in Zilwaukee. In talking about visits to her gandparents' farm in Omer, Emma said that she especially remembered birthday parties and Christmas holidays. She recalled riding a sleigh through the snow and candles providing the light for the family Christmas tree. Emma also recalled one Christmas when her mom was sick and couldn't get out to do the shopping as usual. Her dad did the shopping and bought Emma a doll which she still has today.

When the Zovishlacks moved to Flint Emma was the only child. Her sister, Frances, was born shortly after they moved. Emma recalls being jealous of her new sister but gradually got used to her and enjoyed her companionship as well as that of her two brothers, Peter and Edmund, who were both born by the time she was twelve years old. Emma spoke with obvious enthusiasm about her childhood, her family, and positive memories of life in the near north side of Flint on Mississippi Street near St. John Street, an area now occupied by the Buick Motor Company. Emma explained, "We had a lot of fun in the neighborhood. It was kind of a young subdivision, a lot of new homes in there."

Emma remembered nearby Industrial Avenue having several meat markets and the original Balkan Bakery which eventually moved to its present location on Dayton Street. She recalled that there were "quite a few stores on St. John Street and Leith Street too. Bankers, doctors, dentists were all over there and one of the first Hamady stores too."

While living on Mississippi Avenue Emma attended kindergarten at Fairview School on Leith Street. From the first through the eighth grade Emma attended All Saints Catholic School on Industrial Avenue. She remembered walking to school, "crossing the tracks up Stewart Avenue, and walking down Industrial Avenue to All Saints." Emma spoke of climbing around the railroad cars and how she would be scared to think of kids doing that today. She also spoke of the passenger train referred to as the "Inter-Urban" which used to transport people on the north-south route between Detroit and Bay City. Her family used to ride the train from Flint to Zilwaukee and back to visit relatives and friends. Within the city of Flint, itself, Emma used to ride the streetcar often and would take her brother to go downtown shopping. Emma and her husband, George, both mentioned that "they had tracks all over Flint and had a safety zone in the street with a railing around it where people got on the streetcar."

Life changed significantly for Emma and her family in 1927. They gave up their city life and moved to the country near Clio, Michigan. The visits to Zilwaukee became infrequent because "we moved onto a farm and my dad had so much work to do that

we didn't get a chance to go there much." Emma's formal education also ended. Emma explained: "Then we went out on the farm. I was thirteen. I got through the eighth grade and that's as far as I went. My dad said, 'you don't need any education. Girls don't need to be educated.' That's an old tale all the old guys used to say. Well, they do need education, but they didn't figure they needed it then like they do now. But he said, 'You gotta help out on the farm.' So, that was it. I worked out on the farm." Emma went on to offer more details. "Us girls had to go right out and work with my dad on the farm--pitchin' hay, cleaning the barns and getting manure out, and planting stuff. When we first started out there we planted corn and everything by hand."

Emma and her sister had the responsibility for many of the chores inside as well as outside, and to some extent, that was their own choice. "My mother did a lot of the housework, but we had to help. She loved to be outdoors, so we had to learn how to do the inside. If we would rather have her work outdoors we had to do the inside and get the meals and stuff. So, she let us go ahead and get the meals and all that." Her brothers were not involved in the chores either inside or outside at that time. Emma's youngest brother was only a year old when the Zovishlacks moved to Clio. Both brothers "were just kids so they didn't have to do much yet." Emma's dad was not involved in the housekeeping chores either. He was handy at painting, plastering, wall papering, and fixing machinery, but he was not handy at household chores. Laughingly, Emma said that "Dad

didn't do much in the house. He never knew anything about cookin'. He didn't know anything about housework. He didn't care about workin' in the house. But it was a little different then. He did plenty of work. He was a farmer and worked in the factory both. He cooked one time for us kids and we didn't like the way he cooked. And he said, 'Well, if you don't like the way I cook I won't try cookin' anymore.' He made pancakes as big as a frypan."

Emma had plenty of work to do around the farm but also found time to earn spending money picking strawberries and raspberries and helping a woman make maple syrup and maple candy. Recreation was limited because the farm was located so far away from the city and it was "fifteen miles to the nearest school." Emma explained, "There was nothin' out there--a little country school where they'd have a 'Box Social' once in awhile. Everybody'd bring a box. They'd bid on it and somebody'd buy it. The girls would pack the box lunch. The guys would bid on it, and the girl would eat lunch with whoever bought it. The church was located on Vienna Rd. between Genesee and Belsay. They used to call that area 'Henpeck'." Emma went on to say that she also used to go to the Methodist church on the corner of Vienna and Center roads to play basketball and to sing. Reflecting on her years of growing up in the Zovishlack family Emma added, "I've got a lot of good memories. There was nothing bad about my childhood, I can say, compared to the way some of the kids had bad childhoods. I had a good dad and mother who cared about me. I really had a good childhood."

At the age of eighteen Emma left the farm and moved in to Flint. She described her father's reaction: "When I was eighteen I left the farm very much against my dad's will. He didn't like it at all. He was awfully upset. He thought I would stay on the farm. But I didn't want that. I wanted to get out on my own." So, for awhile Emma worked at a variety of house cleaning jobs in Flint. Eventually, she decided to stand in line at the Fisher Body plant hoping to find work there. When the man came out of the factory to look over the applications he read Emma's information and noticed that her work experience had been associated primarily with housework. As a result, she was not offered a job in the factory but was offered a house-cleaning job instead for Mr. Parker, a general manager at Fisher Body. For three years Emma lived in Birmingham, Michigan, with Mr. and Mrs. Parker and their two small children. She cooked, served meals, did the laundry and house-cleaning chores, and took care of the children.

When Emma decided to move back to Flint Mr. Parker helped her get into the Fisher Body on South Saginaw Street. She worked in the cut and sew department where her job was to tack upholstery inside car doors. Unfortunately, the job only lasted about four months because the factory began to lay people off. Emma returned to house cleaning. This time she worked for Mr. and Mrs. DeCamp in Flint. Mr. DeCamp was a vice-president at Citizens Bank. He and Mrs. DeCamp had four children. Emma worked there full time for about three years and also worked in the catering business for awhile for a caterer named Sid

Pettinger. When the factories began hiring women to replace the men being called into service for World War II Emma sought work at the A.C. Spark Plug factory. She hired into the A.C. in April, 1942, worked full time there and continued to work part time for the DeCamp family for about a year or so longer. By then she had moved back to the farm to live with her family. She had met George Vreeland several years prior to that time and had been "going with him for a long time." Emma was attempting to save money and had begun to purchase furniture in preparation for their marriage.

GEORGE H. VREELAND

George Vreeland was born George H. Vreeland on April 23, 1909, in Flint, Michigan, the fourth of six children of Homer and Daisy Vreeland. During his entire childhood George lived in the south end of Flint on Tobias Street between South Saginaw and Grand Traverse streets. Most of George's family memories include very few of his mother because his parents divorced when he was about five years old. George explained that, "My dad never got over that. Mother left several times, moved in with her mother, and came back again. Finally Dad said she couldn't come back." From then on George's dad took full responsibility for the children. An aunt wanted to take some of the kids but Homer wanted to keep them together. He relied on housekeepers and the older children to help with the younger ones. George spoke with high regard for his family and the care his oldest sister, Eva, provided: "My mother and father divorced when my youngest sister, Mabel, was a little over a year old. My dad raised six kids. But my oldest sister was twelve at that time, 'pertineer' thirteen and she always seemed like a mother to us."

From kindergarten through the second grade George attended Clark School which was located around Tenth Street just south of the present Flint Police Station. From there he moved into temporary buildings until Lincoln School was built on South Saginaw Street. He attended Lincoln School through the eighth grade and went on to Central High School in downtown Flint. When the new Central High School was built at its present site

on Crapo Street George moved over there. He completed the tenth grade and part of the eleventh but quit school because he began to have problems with his eyes and was unable to keep his grades up.

George spoke a lot about his dad's efforts to provide a good family life. He explained that Homer Vreeland worked at Stewart Body, a division of Buick Motor Company: "The factories in those days worked winters but were down all summer. And they didn't pay unemployment. You'd better save your money to live on in the summer time." George's dad did not sit idle when the factory was closed. He was busy planting and harvesting vegetables in his four-acre "truck garden" on Tobias Street. Sometimes people would come to pick tomatoes and other vegetables but, for the most part, Homer would drive around Flint with his horse and wagon to sell the produce. At times he would travel by truck to other areas of Michigan to buy apples, peaches, cabbages, and other types of fruit and vegetables in large quantities. In turn he would sell them in the Flint area. George also recalled selling eggs which were produced by Homer's one hundred laying hens. George commented that "Dad got so he didn't go back to work after awhile at the Buick because he raised and bought so much produce he made a business out of it." George had clear recollections of helping his dad and still proudly owns the bell they used to ring to let people know they were coming by in the wagon."

Homer Vreeland worked hard and expected the children to help. With a large grin George stated that "Dad could always

find work. You'd think all the work was done, but no!' Homer was also a strict disciplinarian. With obvious respect and admiration for his father George remarked, "My dad coulda been a good football player because he could run and kick at the same time and never miss a step kickin' us in the behind. My dad was a strict guy, but we were always doin' something we shouldn't do." George went on to tell about an incident in which he shot "Old Man Cross's horse with a BB gun." The horse took off in high gear and headed back to his barn with Mr. Cross hanging on "to beat hell." Cross complained to Homer about George and the gun. In that particular instance, however, Homer defended George because he didn't allow the kids to have BB guns. He didn't realize that George had traded something to one of the neighbors for the gun. George stuffed the gun in a pile of corn stalks and hid behind his dad's barn where he could hear the entire discussion between Cross and his dad. Afterwards he promptly went out and traded the gun for something else.

Through his stories of family life George provided a picture of a Flint much different from Flint in the 1990's. He recalled stopping at the corner of Saginaw and Court streets "in front of the old county court house where horses could drink from a fountain that flowed continuously even during the winter." He also clearly remembered taking their horse and wagon to town and leaving them at a "Ten Cent Barn" located at the present site of the Capitol Theater on Second Street. They would leave hay for the horse, and for a fee of ten cents the horse would

be cared for while they went shopping. Horses were not the only means of travel, however. Streetcars were also widely used in Flint. "Tracks were located all over town and it was possible to transfer from one line to another." Laughingly George spoke of teenagers, perhaps eight or ten at a time, getting together and teetering on one end of a streetcar until the other end would come off the track. George also explained that streetcars were around into the late 1930's when trolley cars on rubber tires came into use and the tracks were removed. He further stated that horses were not in use as long because cars began to be manufactured in greater numbers than when first on the market. He laughed as he talked about the "Chevy 490" series and cars coming into wider use during the 1920's. "People used to say it was called the '490' because it was four days on the road and ninety days in the garage."

George took great delight in talking about recreation that occurred during his years of growing up, just as he delighted in relating other aspects of his childhood years. He recalled playing in a sand pit near Tobias and Grand Traverse streets and playing baseball in a field behind Lincoln School on Saginaw Street. He also remembered a park called Lakeside Park at Thread Lake off Lapeer Road in the south end of Flint. George would go there a lot during the summer to ride the roller coaster, go roller skating in the rink, or play ball with friends. He would also play baseball on a ball diamond that they put on a field next to his house. He reminisced that "Dad would sometimes come out there and sit in a chair under the apple

tree to watch us play." A particularly vivid recreational memory for George was the gathering of neighbors at their house. "In those days you didn't have all the televisions and radios. My dad had the first radio in the whole neighborhood. And when the fights would come, like Dempsey fightin' Tunney--that was in 1927--he'd get a wash tub. The man next door made beer and they'd bring beer over and get some ice and they'd sit there listenin' to the fights. We'd listen to the fights as kids, but they wouldn't let us drink the beer." As George reflected back on his childhood activities and growing up he commented, "It was different because we didn't have a mother. And Christmas meant that you'd get clothes for the next year and one toy. We had a good life though. We always had enough to eat, and dad was always looking out for us."

George's work career began when he was quite young. By the age of twelve he was using his skill to make kites and sell them to other kids in the neighborhood. He also repaired bikes and even built new wheels for them when necessary. For awhile George also delivered The Flint Journal on a daily basis for a cost to the customer of three cents per copy or fifteen cents weekly. Since home delivery of the Journal was not available on weekends at that time George also delivered The Detroit Free Press and The Detroit News on Saturdays and Sundays. During the summer George was employed as a caddy at the Flint Country Club "for the big shots out there." He caddied at times for Albert Champion, the man for whom the A.C. Spark Plug factory was named. He related that "I was caddying the day J.D. Dort,

the owner of Dort Car Company, died right out, I think, on the eighteenth hole." By the time George was eighteen years old he was working behind the food counter at Thompson's Restaurant on Saginaw Street in downtown Flint. He earned twenty-one dollars for working seven days per week. Two dollars and fifty cents of that was used each week to keep his uniforms laundered and ready for work. After working at Thompson's for one winter he left to run an air hammer for Bell Telephone Company as part of their process for putting in underground telephone lines. The following October George went to work for the Grand Trunk Railroad laying railroad ties during the winter months. When the job was finished he got laid off. He was offered a job keeping financial records for Grand Trunk, but his eyes were giving him problems and he was unable to work in that capacity. In fact, other than working as a laborer digging basements for an excavating company for a couple of summers, George did not work away from home again until several years later after he and Emma Zovishlack were married. Instead, during those years he worked with his dad planting, harvesting, and selling produce. He was working there when he and Emma began making wedding plans.

GEORGE AND EMMA VREELAND

George Vreeland and Emma Zovishlack met when he was twenty-two years old and she was sixteen. They saw each other occasionally and gradually became good friends. By the time George was about thirty years old his eyesight was becoming progressively worse. So, in 1939 George, Emma, and George's sister, Mabel, traveled to Baltimore, Maryland, and spent two weeks there consulting with specialists. Although the doctors had some differing opinions, they decided to treat George for tuberculosis of the eyes. To no avail, George received injections three times per week for over two years. It was not until some years later that doctors finally diagnosed the problem as retinitis pigmentosa, a disease which often begins in childhood and progressively worsens until, for some people, total blindness occurs.

By the time George and Emma began making wedding plans Emma had been away from home working for several years and had returned to the family farm. George had continued to live with his dad on Tobias Street after all of his brothers and sisters had moved away and married. When George and Emma got married on June 6, 1942, he was thirty-three years old and she was twenty-seven. For the first year or so of marriage they lived with George's dad. They were very fond of him but, Emma explained, "We wanted our own home. George's dad was so unhappy because we were leaving but he said, 'I know you want your own place.' So, he loaned us the money to buy a home. We didn't mind accepting the money because Dad charged interest and we

didn't feel like we were just getting a hand out." They lived on Brady Street in the south end of Flint for two years but decided then to sell the house and rent another house owned by and located across the street from George's dad. Then in 1947, with his dad's help again, George and Emma bought a newly built house on Dawson Street around the corner from George's dad where they lived for twenty-seven years.

When George and Emma moved to Dawson Street George could still see somewhat during the daytime but not much in the evenings, although he remembered being able to see the Christmas lights which decorated two pine trees in their yard. "Then one day," George explained, "I got up in the morning. It was Sunday and Emma was cookin' breakfast. And I said to Emma, 'What time is it? Why are you cookin' breakfast when it's still night?' Emma said, 'It's not night. It's daylight.' That's when the rest of it went, when I was still sleepin'." George was never to regain his sight. He has been blind now for almost fifty years. Emma commented that "George resented the fact that he couldn't work with figures. That was something he liked to do." She also explained that they regretted never having children and that "we always thought a lot of the reason we didn't have any children is because he took all them shots that time. They were strong." But those are the only regrets they expressed. George and Emma have not wasted time wishing things could be different. They have been active in a variety of recreational activities as well as in full time employment with the General Motors Corporation.

Emma Vreeland had been lucky to gain employment at the A.C. Spark Plug factory in April, 1942, shortly before her marriage to George. Two years later George was also fortunate to find employment at the A.C. Both were able to hire in there because World war II had created a shortage of men working in the factory. George was hired also because, he said, "They wanted somebody who could train other handicapped workers." He had taken blind training at the School For the Blind in Saginaw, Michigan, and felt confident enough to help others. When George hired into the Dort Highway plant in 1944 Emma was working at the Industrial Avenue plant. Within approximately two months Emma was transferred to Dort Highway so she could be close to him.

Throughout their employment at the A.C. George and Emma worked in the same or neighboring departments. He ran a grinder for many years. She worked a lot on a punch press. One time George was given a job working between two ovens. He described what it was like: "You couldn't sweat. It would dry up on ya. It was hot, and them parts were so hot. I'd handle 'em with leather gloves and flip 'em over into another dye thing--that hot rubber! Then you shove em' into another oven." George was not on that job long, however, because the general foreman was concerned about a blind person working with hot dye and in such extremely hot conditions. Both George and Emma expressed their satisfaction with the foremen and felt that they always looked out for George to see that he had what he needed. Emma also expressed her own satisfaction with employment at the A.C.:

"It used to seem like it would never end, but I never hated it. One of the things about workin' in the factory is that, I don't know how it would be now to work in there but I know we had a lot of comraderie in the factory. Everybody was together. Nobody else took the blame for what somebody else did or anything, you know what I mean, we'd all kinda stick together." Emma went on to say that "I'm glad I worked there. The thirty-one years that I worked there seemed like forever but it paid off. I used to say if I could get five years of retirement I'd figure it was pretty good, but from '72 till now I've had all these years." George agreed with Emma and added his own sentiments about working: "We never missed a day like some people. You betcha I'm happy I worked in the factory. They were good to me. I get a pension, bonuses, Blue Cross. We worked and made good money."

George retired in 1969 at the age of sixty after twenty-five years of service to the A.C. He had fallen and broken his "tail bone" while visiting his sister, Eva, in California. General Motors granted him a disability retirement. Emma retired in 1972 at the age of fifty-seven after nearly thirty-one years of service. By 1974 George's dad had died at the age of ninety, and security had become a problem in their neighborhood. George and Emma's house had been broken into. They decided to move into an apartment in the Mapleridge Apartment Complex near VanSlyke and Maple roads. After a few years they moved in order to better care for Emma's mother who was no longer able to live alone and care for herself. Because climbing the stairs to

their apartment was too difficult for her they moved to the cottage, located on the Titabawasee River near West Branch, Michigan, that they had hired a contractor to build in the mid 1950's. Over the years they had enjoyed the cottage and thought it would be a pleasant location for her mother. They stayed there only about six months, however, because it was too far from the necessary medical care located in Flint. George and Emma moved back to Flint and rented a mobile home in Dort Village on the corner of Dort Highway and Lippincott Boulevard. Susan Zovishlack was only with them there for about two months when it became necessary for her to move to a convalescent center. She died in 1980 at the age of eighty-five. George and Emma continued to live in the mobile home until 1988 when they moved into a ranch condo, a home on one floor located in an area of townhouses near Bristol and Fenton roads. They are very contented in their home and wonder why they didn't move into a condominium sooner.

As George and Emma spoke of her mother's death and the death of George's dad they agreed that death was something they had encountered when they were "older." Both recalled children from their respective schools who had died from diptheria or spinal meningitis. George particularly remembered going with his sixth grade class to view through the window of her home a girl who had died and was laid out there. His first experience of the death of a family member did not occur, however, until he was twenty-five years old. His maternal grandmother died then in 1934. Emma's experience was similar. She was already

grown when her grandmother died. Her dad died several years later in 1953 at sixty years of age while working in the garden at the family farm. Both George and Emma have lost siblings in recent years but are thankful for the closeness they have always shared with their families.

Throughout the years George and Emma have helped and supported each other. They have attended movies, parties, and other social gatherings. During their earlier years of marriage George would accompany Emma as she went deer hunting in the woods "up north." They have been active in the lives of family and friends. For several years they met Milly and Art Sly each Tuesday for breakfast at a local restaurant. George and Emma have generously welcomed and entertained guests at their home and their cottage. They have welcomed and cared for their nieces and nephews. Emma described their lives this way: "Well, we've had a lot of nice things happen. We've got a lot of family, that's one thing, all kinds of nieces and nephews on both sides of the family. But then George had six in his family, and four in mine. So, we were never without family even though we didn't have one of our own. Why, everybody else's kids always come to our house. Now we have our nieces and nephews' kids that we take." George and Emma Vreeland's care for family and friends is an outgrowth of the partnership, the friendship that they began with each other many years ago. George admitted that life has been challenging, but both he and Emma agreed that it has been happy. Their happiness was evident in their voices, in their stories, and in the way they relate to each other.

COMPARISONS, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONTHE GROWING UP YEARS

My special seniors were all born in the early part of the Twentieth Century. The oldest, Art Sly, was born in October, 1904. Following in chronological order are Mabel (Albrecht) Sly, December, 1905, Mabel's husband, Sam Sly, February, 1906, George Vreeland, April, 1909, Art's wife, Milly (Gonyaw) Sly, March, 1914, and George's wife, Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland, in December, 1914. Each senior grew up during a time in which a majority of Americans were still living on farms but were seeing the growth of industry take place. During those years the automotive industry was developing in Flint and Genesee County, and General Motors was in its early stages of growth. Eventually all of these seniors but Mabel would be employed by and retire from General Motors.

All of the seniors descend from a variety of European backgrounds. Both Art and Sam Sly considered German and Swedish as their nationalities, but Art also claims Scotch, Irish, and Holland-Dutch. Milly (Gonyaw) Sly claims French and Irish descent while Mabel (Albrecht) Sly listed German and English as her heritage. George Vreeland considers his lineage as Dutch, German, and English while Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland designates Polish and French as her ancestry. The basis for the seniors' beliefs comes primarily from information passed on to them by word of mouth from parents and other relatives while they were growing up. Without conducting genealogical research it would be difficult to substantiate their specific nationalities. It

can be stated, however, that all six are of Caucasian ancestry.

Art and Sam Sly were the first and second of four sons born to Samuel and Edith (Freeholm) Sly but the second and third boys in the family following Ted, their uncle, who was already being raised as their brother. Mabel was the youngest of five children, George the fourth of six children, Milly the youngest of nine girls since an older brother had died at the age of three months, and Emma was the oldest of four. Each of their families of origin had at least four children. None of the seniors grew up without siblings in the household.

George Vreeland's parents divorced when he was about five years old and his father, Homer, raised the six children. Milly (Gonyaw) Sly's parents both had died by the time she was ten years of age, and her older sisters raised her. The rest of the seniors lived in two parent households and did not lose either parent until they had reached adulthood.

Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland left school after the eighth grade to help on her parents' farm. Sam Sly quit during the ninth grade. Art Sly and George Vreeland both quit during their eleventh grade years. Mabel (Albrecht) Sly left school following the eleventh grade. Milly (Gonyaw) Sly was the only high school graduate. None of them attended a college or university.

Several of the seniors mentioned that the times were different when they were growing up than they are now. They spoke of having radios but no televisions. They mentioned the presence of streetcars along with horses and buggies, but no cars, at least during their early years of growing up. They

also related stories about having no electricity in their homes for part of their growing up years, washboards rather than electric or gas operated washing machines, and manual farming instead of power driven machinery. Several also mentioned the prevalence of walking in their lives. For example, Mabel (Albrecht) Sly spoke of walking a mile and a half to school while Sam Sly told of walking two miles to a theater. Others talked about walking to school, to friends' houses, and to streetcar lines. Art Sly revealed that walking continued to be an important part of his life even after marrying Milly (Gonyaw) Sly. Because they could not afford a car it was necessary for him to walk about two miles to work at the Chevrolet Motor Company. Times were different then. Modern conveniences we often take for granted today, such as automobiles, televisions, and microwave ovens were either part of these seniors' lives on a limited scale or not at all.

Leisure and entertainment activities during the seniors' growing up years varied. Baseball, basketball, sledding, swimming, movie theaters, card playing, and dancing were mentioned consistently, but the activities I found most interesting were the house parties, sleigh rides, and listening to the radio. The house parties in which furniture was removed from rooms to permit dancing indicate the family orientation of leisure activities because family members and friends of all ages were included. The sleigh rides give credence to the seniors' statements that automobiles were not yet widely used for travel or pleasure. George Vreeland's description of people

gathered around the radio to listen to the Dempsey-Tunney fight vividly substantiates comments that television was not yet part of their lives. Most of these activities, whether still common today or no longer a major part of America's leisure time, continued into the young adult years of the interviewees' lives or longer. Playing cards and dancing were especially long lasting and reveal the social nature of these seniors.

All of the seniors were familiar with household responsibilities. From gardening and farm chores to house cleaning and cooking, they were expected to do their share of the work. For the most part, the men tended to take care of outdoor work like mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, and doing farm chores, while women tended to help with cooking, cleaning, laundry, and dishes. This division of labor followed the pattern that had been established by their parents. This pattern became evident when Art and Sam Sly both spoke of their mother as a good housekeeper and their father as a lumberjack, farmer, and superintendent of Glenwood Cemetery. It was revealed when Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland laughed about her father's attempt at cooking pancakes and explained that her dad worked on the farm and in the factory while her mother took care of the household chores. Throughout Milly (Gonyaw) Sly's story the experience was the same. Her father worked in a shipyard and as a laborer on Great Lakes' ships while her mother tended the house and children. After her parents died and Milly lived with her sisters, the men farmed or worked outside the home while the women took care of the house. In George Vreeland's home the

situation was different because of his parents' divorce and his dad raising the children. Yet, George indicated the strong role of women in the home as he spoke of his oldest sister, Eva, being like a mother to him and of his dad relying on housekeepers to help care for the house and the children.

All of the subjects in one way or another indicated that "making a living" was a central activity for their parents and that they had been hard workers. Art and Sam Sly's father put in long hours as the superintendent and laborer at Glenwood Cemetery while their mother worked hard cooking, cleaning the house, and washing clothes by hand in a wash tub. The story was similar in the home of Mabel (Albrecht) Sly whose father was part of the Lapeer State Home maintenance staff while her mother cared for the home and children as well as her handicapped uncle. Things were different in George Vreeland's home, not because there was less need for work, but because his parents' divorce placed his dad in the role of sole breadwinner. Working winters at Stewart Body and farming during the summer while the factory was closed kept Homer Vreeland plenty busy. Eventually, when he found full-time farming to be as beneficial as splitting time between the factory and farming, there was always enough work to keep him and the children busy making a living for the family. Similarly, Milly (Gonyaw) Sly's "parents" struggled to make a living. In each of her sisters' households, where she lived following the death of her parents, the situation was similar. In Bay City Art and Rose (Gonyaw) Petrimoulx hauled coal, farmed, and raised a large family.

In Swartz Creek Jack and Florence (Gonyaw) Ryan raised, killed, and cleaned poultry. Jack also found factory work while they raised three boys. In Flint Russell and Bernetta (Gonyaw) Jamieson were raising four children while Russell worked as a fireman. When he died, before the younger children had completed high school, Bert found it necessary to gain employment at Chevrolet Motor Company. In each of the seniors' families, there was the need for hard work in order to make a living.

Being poor accompanied the necessity of making a living. Art Sly did not directly say that his family was poor, but his comment, "Everything was to help live," expressed it well. Simply put, if you didn't work you couldn't make it. Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland's circumstances substantiate this fact. As she put it, "I was thirteen. I got through the eighth grade and that's as far as I went. . . . Dad said, 'You gotta help out on the farm.' So, that was it. I worked out on the farm." Sam Sly, who also worked on a farm when his family first moved to Flint, described how things were when he exclaimed, "Oh, we were poor, and when you wanted to go to the show it cost you a nickel and you walked the two miles down there." In a similar way George Vreeland expressed the reality: "It was different because we didn't have a mother, and Christmas meant that you'd get clothes for the next year and one toy." Finally, Milly (Gonyaw) Sly's reflection that "I used to go along the tracks with a couple of Rose and Art's kids to pick up coal that had fallen off the trains and bring it home for fuel" vividly portrays the strapped financial situation of the

interviewees and their families. Milly spoke of Rose and Art's growing family and of times being tough for them. The reason for her move from the Petrimoulx home in Bay City to her sister Florence's house in Swartz Creek was summed up well in her words, "That was one less mouth to feed." Being poor was just part of life for these seniors, just the way it was.

Working outside the home during their growing up and early teenage years was a clear recollection for four of the seniors. George Vreeland's kite building, bicycle repairing, newspaper delivering, and working at the Flint Country Club gave him spending money. Emma (Zovishlack) Vreeland earned her spending money picking raspberries and strawberries and helping a woman make maple syrup and candy. Sam Sly's farming and driving cattle for a neighbor, as well as carrying water for workers at Fisher Body, were his sources of personal income. Milly (Gonyaw) Sly earned her money for spending but also to help pay room and board to her sister, Bert, by hiring out as a domestic worker doing housecleaning and babysitting. For each of these seniors working outside their own homes brought some sense of independence and a feeling of accomplishment.

THE ADULT YEARS

One of the experiences common to all the interviewees after they were married was living for awhile with parents or in homes owned by parents. Sam and Mabel Sly lived for a short time with his parents, then for most of their lives with her parents until they died. After Art Sly married Vivian LaBarr, they lived for awhile with his parents before moving out on their

own. After Milly Gonyaw married Ed Richert, they lived for awhile in a home owned by Ed's dad. Several years later, when they separated and again when they divorced, Milly moved back home with her sister, Bert. George and Emma Vreeland lived with George's dad for awhile, then in a home owned by his dad, and eventually in a home across the street from him. The strong family ties and willingness to help each other within the families of origin was evident in all of these stories.

There did not seem to be a discernable relationship between the ages of the interviewees at the time of marriage and the outcome of the marriages. Sam Sly was two weeks shy of his twentieth birthday when he married twenty year old Mabel Albrecht in 1926. They celebrated sixty-seven years together in February, 1993, shortly before his death in March, 1993. Art Sly was twenty-three years of age when he married twenty year old Vivian LaBarr in 1927. Their marriage lasted about thirteen years. Milly Gonyaw and Ed Richert were twenty years old when they married in 1934. Their marriage ended about ten years later. George Vreeland was thirty-three years of age when he married twenty-seven year old Emma Zovishlack. They celebrated their fifty-fifth anniversary on June 6, 1997. Art Sly was forty-one years of age and Milly (Gonyaw) Richert thirty-one when they married in 1946. They celebrated fifty-one years together in February, 1997.

The number of children in the lives of the interviewees varied. As George and Emma Vreeland indicated in their story, they had hoped to have children but were never able to do so,

perhaps, because of the treatments he received for his failing eyesight. Sam and Mabel Sly had one daughter, Peggy, who died at the age of fifty-three. Art and Milly Sly formed a blended family of his two children, her three, and two more from their marriage for a total of seven children. Six are still living. Circumstances as much as desire for children played a significant role in all of their lives.

Although Art Sly preferred not to say much about his first marriage, his comment that he felt bitterness over the failed relationship for some time after the divorce indicates that there was pain for him, for Vivian, and for the children, Joyce and Sonny. Likewise, in Milly Sly's situation there was much pain. I was surprised that her marriage, divorce, and the accompanying consequences for the children, Shirley, John, and Pat, sounded like they could have been pages taken from Lillian Rubin's World's Of Pain (Rubin, 1976). The problems of alcohol, unsteady work, separation, creditors removing furniture, and the children being placed in an institutional home for children were painful experiences for each member of that family. The times of loneliness, the heartache of failed relationships, separation from the children, and the economic hardships for Art and Milly, their former spouses, and the children are realities they had to face. Marriage for Art and Milly was not easy at first as they continued to deal with financial burdens and developing relationships in a blended family.

Pain was not foreign to the other seniors either. None of them had to deal with alcoholism, failed marriages, or

developing blended families. Instead, the pain that was evident in their interviews was the result of different kinds of loss. In Sam and Mabel Sly's case, the loss of their developing sons during the eighth month and sixth month of pregnancy respectively was a pain that remained throughout their married life. The death of their daughter, Peggy, in 1982 added to that pain. For George and Emma Vreeland, it was the loss of George's eyesight, as well as their never having children of their own that caused sorrow. Pain for these seniors was not related to marital problems nor to circumstances particular to the working class. It was related to the frailty of life itself.

Because the seniors all had faced pain I wondered if religion might have played a role in dealing with life's challenges. I discovered that religious affiliation was more significant for some seniors than for others. While reviewing the questionnaires I discovered that Art Sly, as well as Sam and Mabel Sly, had listed their religion as Protestant. They did not designate membership with any particular denomination of Protestantism, such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Baptist. Nor did they refer much to religion during the interviews. The closest any of the three got to discussing religion was Mabel who referred to communicating frequently with God. Actually, Milly Sly, George Vreeland, and Emma Vreeland didn't dwell on religion either. However, all three have been active Roman Catholics for many years. Emma and Milly have been Catholic since being baptized as infants. George, on the other hand, had attended church frequently with Emma throughout their

married lives but only converted to Catholicism after he and Emma retired from factory work. George and Emma consider membership in the church an important part of their lives. Milly Sly, likewise, regards membership in the Catholic Church very important. She spoke of receiving her First Communion, attending and graduating from St. Matthew's School, sending her own children to Catholic schools, and of her daughter, Shirley, becoming a nun. She spoke of God's importance in her life and how He has guided her throughout her lifetime. Her husband, Art, has never been interested in joining the Catholic Church because "all religions are trying to get to the same place." But Art has supported Milly in her beliefs and attended religious events in their children's lives. Perhaps the best assessment of the religious views of these special seniors, although church membership and practices vary, is that they have all felt the influence of Christian beliefs in their lives. Underpinning their attitudes and dealings with life situations has been a belief in God's existence and a basic positive attitude toward life itself which each developed, though coming from a variety of childhood backgrounds and experiences.

Before beginning the interviews I had wondered what major historical events would stand out as important happenings in the seniors' lives. For Art Sly the Sit-Down Strike of 1936-1937 against General Motors in Flint was significant because he was employed at Chevrolet Motor Division at the time. Also for Art and for some of the others, the Great Depression of the 1930's was significant because it made things economically

difficult for them and their families. But the event that stood out as having a major impact on at least four of the interviewees was the one that all six referred to as "the war." Although all of the seniors had been born by the time World War I was in progress and all had lived during the time of the Korean War of the 1950's and the Viet Nam War of the 1960's and '70's, World War II was for them, "the war." Even though I had grown up hearing my parents and others of their generation use that term and had always known to which war they were referring, it was not until conducting the interviews that I realized how significant it was in their lives. Milly Sly lost two nephews, sons of Rose and Art Petrimoulx, and other interviewees had friends who lost loved ones. Yet, it was out of this terrible tragedy of war that three of the seniors benefitted greatly in their personal lives. George Vreeland, Emma Vreeland, and Milly Sly all revealed that they had obtained work at General Motors because so many American men were involved in the war overseas that jobs opened up in the factories in Flint to other men and to women as well. Had the openings not occurred these seniors may never have experienced long term, consistent employment nor the accompanying benefits and retirement programs.

Work for all of the subjects during their married lives seemed to have a similar positive tone, even if circumstances differed. For Mabel Sly work outside the home started after Peggy had been raised and grandchildren had been born. Work was not a necessity for her but something she enjoyed. Prior to her work at the State Home in Lapeer, Michigan, she had been

a homemaker and had the good fortune of assistance from her mother. There was no sense of frustration in her story about being a wife and mother. Work in the Sly home continued along the traditional lines Sam and Mabel had both grown up with. Sam worked in the factory while Mabel worked at home. Sam revealed some frustration in the early years of employment until stable work at the Buick Motor Company became available. After that, however, work was a necessity but not something he hated. Working for a living brought him satisfaction and a good retirement.

Work for Art Sly was something he knew about from his childhood as he helped with farming and cemetery care, but even more so after he quit school and embarked on work as one of his primary life activities. It was for him, as for Sam, a necessity. Yet, as he revealed in his interview, "I liked it or I wouldn't have stayed there, to tell you the truth. I liked factory work." Milly Sly viewed factory work similarly: "Some people complained about the jobs and how they hated them. I never really did." Nor did she hate her home responsibilities. There were times she tired of housework, but Milly liked being a mother and caring for her family. Cooking dinners and seeing her family enjoy them gave her great satisfaction.

As revealed in their stories, George and Emma Vreeland have had a unique situation because of George's blindness. From handling the finances, to keeping the house clean, to driving the car, Emma has carried the primary responsibility of keeping the household together. At the same time their

marriage has been a partnership. Learning to become significantly self-sufficient, George has helped in whatever ways he could. Learning the layout of their homes and cottage so that he could find his way around, drying dishes, and helping with minor repairs are just a few of the ways George has taken personal responsibility and ownership of household tasks. Neither George nor Emma bemoans the work involved in keeping their house and marriage running smoothly. Nor did they find factory work demeaning or demoralizing. As Emma expressed it, "I'm glad I worked there." George concurred, "You betcha I'm happy I worked in the factory. They were good to me."

Leisure for these seniors has often been family oriented throughout their married lives as it was during their growing up years. The house parties with dancing and card playing that Art, Sam, and Mabel spoke about were prevalent during their younger married years. Holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions have been family oriented, as well, and have included their parents, children, or nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, and other family members. Card playing, vacations, and hunting trips also frequently included members of the extended family. To some extent these activities were planned to get away from the routine of daily life, but they did not appear to be simply a diversion. They were enjoyed in and of themselves among people who genuinely liked getting together. Whether eating an occasional dinner out or going dancing as a couple, or joining extended family or friends, these seniors have enjoyed their leisure time and welcomed it as part of a

generally positive and happy life.

Since being poor was part of the subjects' growing up years I wondered if the same would hold true during their adult years. Sam Sly alluded to the financial responsibilities and burdens that were part of his and Mabel's married life as they were starting out and later when they helped care for Mabel's parents, her handicapped uncle, and their daughter, Peggy. Art Sly spoke of the economic strains that he and all of his neighbors faced during the Depression years when he and Vivian were raising a family. He mentioned them also when speaking of his marriage to Milly and the financial strains of maintaining a blended family. Milly portrayed conditions graphically when revealing that she and Art got married while having only "his paycheck and ten dollars he had given her for Valentine's Day." There is no doubt that there were financial stresses and strains for both the Sam and Mabel and the Art and Milly Sly families. For George and Emma Vreeland the situation was, perhaps, not as financially constrained since they did not have children to support. For them, however, it was not easy either, as indicated by the fact that they found it necessary to borrow money from George's dad in order to put a down payment on their house. Gradually, for all of the interviewees, the economic situation improved and they became more financially secure. None became rich but things became more comfortable than they had been in the early years of marriage. They gained security in employment and have enjoyed that security into their retirement years.

CONCLUSION

There were a few circumstances from the lives of these subjects and their families that particularly caused me to pause and reflect. First, as I listened to the tape of my mother's life-course interview it became very clear to me that Milly Sly's growing up years had been much different from my own. The death of her parents when she was very young led to her moving from household to household, whereas I lived with my parents and siblings in the same house for over eighteen years until attending college. I felt sad about her circumstances and sensed a certain degree of pain that she must have experienced during those years.

Secondly, I was amazed by the parallels between the lives of some of Rubin's subjects and those of my older brothers and sisters who experienced the divorce of their parents and disruption in their living situations. I wondered if interviews with their working-class contemporaries might reveal similar experiences. I wondered also if interviewing their contemporaries might have revealed a different kind of picture than the one obtained by interviewing senior citizens. In other words, since the seniors had completed the working outside the home portion of their lives at the time of the interviews and were several years into retirement, I considered the possibility that they might be too far removed from the frustrations felt in their earlier adult years to voice them emphatically now. I wondered if these same people had been interviewed when they

were in their thirties and forties whether or not a less joyful experience of life would have been expressed.

Thirdly, I wondered what kind of results a wider sampling of working-class seniors might have produced. Had I interviewed several more seniors would I have discovered frustration, bitterness, and anger, or would I have found the same kind of satisfaction and contentment that was expressed by my interviewees? I considered the possibility that further studies might be necessary to answer my questions, but if so, such investigation is beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, the conclusions I offer are based on the interviews with my special seniors of Flint, Michigan.

Working-class lives are both worlds of pain and worlds of joy. They are mixed realities rather than one or the other. Lillian Breslow Rubin has clearly stated the painful side of working-class life but has slighted the joyful side. I do not dispute the fact that pain exists in working-class lives, but Rubin focused so much on the negative experiences of her interviewees that she may have missed the joy that existed in their lives. Throughout her book Rubin focused on negative aspects of situations even when positive aspects may have existed. For example, her belief that working-class women enjoy working outside the home primarily because they have been trained for a life of subservience, or because the life of the homemaker is so distasteful, does not permit the possibility of a positive experience in and of itself. Certainly, not all working-class women are ecstatic about housework and would find relief in

working outside the home, but some might just enjoy working, not because they hate housework or are prone to subservience, but because there is satisfaction in it. Emma Vreeland did say that sometimes she thought her working days would never end but she also expressed positive feelings about factory work and the people who worked with her. Likewise, Milly Sly and Mabel Sly spoke in positive terms about their working years. There was nothing in their words, tone, or manner which led me to believe that they enjoyed it simply because they hated housework or that subservience was a way of life to which they had become accustomed. Do working-class men and women find their home lives or their jobs meaningless, unbearably routine, or distasteful? I have no doubt that some do. My interviewees did not.

My disagreement with Rubin does not lie in her assessment that working-class lives are painful. I am convinced of the pain; my family has experienced it. I did not personally experience what my older brothers and sisters felt when my father and Vivian divorced or when my mother and Ed divorced. I did not have the experience that Shirley, John, and Pat had of living in the children's home nor the pain my mother felt when it was necessary for her to place them there. Although I can only imagine what it must have been like for them, Rubin clearly was in touch with their pain when she wrote World's of Pain (Rubin, 1976). She was also in touch with my pain when she spoke of families being affected by hard-living relatives influenced by alcoholism and inconsistent work habits. John

Richert, the son of Art and Milly Sly lost tragically in 1976, the year World's of Pain was published, could have been one of Rubin's statistics because he so fit her description of the hard-living type. But he was not a character from her book. He was my older brother, a warm and special person who would go out of his way to help people. The difficulty was that he never overcame his drinking problem. At times, under the influence of alcohol, he was mean and unreasonable. At the age of thirty-nine John was only beginning the second year of his third marriage when his wife shot him. She called it an accident. The jury called it voluntary manslaughter. Is there pain in working-class families? From personal experience I can emphatically say yes. There is sometimes pain that will never go away. But that is only one side of the story.

My experience of working-class life has been a mixture of sorrow and joy. Being familiar with the pain I can speak about the happiness too. The joy which was a major part of my growing up years has continued to be a part of my adulthood along with the pain. That joy--loving parents, brothers and sisters who care about each other with no mention of half or step-brother or step-sister status, and special extended family members who have added love and fond memories to my life--has not been overshadowed by the pain. Nor did I see it overshadowed in the lives of my special seniors. There isn't one of those I interviewed who could say that pain has not touched their lives. For some, as for me, the pain is still felt. Yet, there is no sense of gloom, nor "bitterness, loneliness, anger,

rebelliousness, and resignation (Rubin, 1976: 24 & 25)" that Rubin speaks of finding in her interviewees. Perhaps I have missed something in my interviews that Rubin caught in hers, but I am taking my seniors at their word. When Sam Sly said that he had a happy childhood, I believed him. When Emma Vreeland voiced the same kind of experience, I was convinced. When Art Sly said he enjoyed factory work, I took his word for it because he has never been shy about expressing his feelings concerning things he dislikes. When feelings of contentment and satisfaction showed in the eyes and voices of the seniors, I believed them. Perhaps they were blocking out the pain, but they were not acting. They were expressing genuine joy, an overall sense of well being and satisfaction with life. Those feelings correlate well with the attitudes and actions that I have seen and felt in the presence of these seniors throughout my lifetime. Predominant pain with only a few happy memories here and there, as Rubin suggests? A few good memories, but not happiness? That has not been my experience nor the experience of my special seniors of Flint, Michigan. Perhaps their lives have been more positive than those of Rubin's subjects because they worked for General Motors, were well paid, and have received a valuable package of good health benefits and a decent retirement wage. Maybe their situation has been more like that of Halle's satisfied Imperium workers. Consequently, their lives may have been consistently better off than the workers Rubin interviewed. Perhaps my seniors were part of the consumer-oriented society spawned by the Second

Industrial Revolution that Edsforth describes. As such, maybe they, as automobile factory workers in an automobile centered city, downplayed whatever discomfort, dissatisfaction, or pain that came from factory work and focused on the financial gains and higher standard of living that eventually resulted from it. For whatever reasons, the seniors I interviewed did not display symptoms or life patterns which would indicate the presence of the injuries of class spoken of by Sennett or Cobb. Nor did they display the extent of pain found by Rubin in her subjects and concurred with by Zinn. These working-class individuals experienced poverty at some point in their lives and occasionally felt frustrated about work. Some experienced pain that may still remain. But, as Halle stated about his Imperium Workers, I believe that Rubin's depiction of working-class lives as worlds of pain goes too far for my subjects. Based on the lives of my special seniors of Flint, Michigan, and on my own lived experience, I submit that working-class lives should not be described as "worlds of pain." Instead, a much more accurate description would be "worlds of pain and joy."

A CONCISE GENEALOGY OF MY SPECIAL SENIORS OF FLINT, MICHIGAN

(Included are the names of the interviewed seniors, their parents, children, and siblings if integral to the biographies.)

MILLY (GONYAW) SLY
(Mildred L. Sly)

Parents:

Charles Gonyaw
Anna (LaChance) Gonyaw

Siblings:

Agnes, Rose (& Art) Petrimoulx,
Julia (& Fred) Petrimoulx, Marie
Gordon, Bernetta (& Russell)
Jamieson, Thelma (Mickey),
Florence (& Jack Ryan), Cecelia
(& Fred) Brill, and Joseph (who
died at age 3 months).

Children:

1st marriage to Edward Richert:
Shirley, John, and Patrick

2nd marriage to Arthur C. Sly:
Leonard and Rick

MABEL (ALBRECHT) SLY
(Mabel C. Sly)

Parents:

Paul H. Albrecht
Diana (Simpson) Albrecht

Siblings:

Four brothers and sisters

Children:

One marriage to Sam H. Sly:
Daughter, Peggy

EMMA (ZOVISHLACK) VREELAND
(Emma M. Vreeland)

Parents:

Peter P. Zovishlack

ART SLY

(Arthur C. Sly)

Parents:

Samuel I. Sly
Edith (Freeholm) Sly

Siblings:

Ted (uncle/brother),
Sam (& Mabel), Leonard
(who died at age 3),
and Oral (& Ina).

Children:

1st marriage to Vivian
LaBarr: Joyce and Sonny

2nd marriage to Mildred
L. Gonyaw: Leonard and
Rick

SAM SLY

(Samuel H. Sly)

Parents:

Samuel I. Sly
Edith (Freeholm) Sly

Siblings:

Ted (uncle/brother),
Art, Leonard (died at
3 years of age), and
Oral.

Children:

One marriage to Mabel
C. Albrecht:
Daughter, Peggy

GEORGE VREELAND

(George H. Vreeland)

Parents:

Homer L. Vreeland

Susan (Donnenwerth) Vreeland

Siblings:

One sister, Frances, and two
brothers: Peter and Edmund

Children:

One marriage to George H.
Vreeland:
No children

Daisy V. Rollins

Siblings:

Three sisters and two
brothers; the oldest,
Eva, the youngest, Mabel

Children:

One marriage to Emma
M. Zovishlack:
No children

LIFE COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

- (Last) (First) (Middle) (Maiden)
1. Name: _____
 2. Birth Date: _____ Age: _____
 3. Place of Birth: _____
 4. Year or age you moved to the Flint area: _____
 5. Father's Name: (Last) (First) (Middle) _____
 6. Mother's Name: (Maiden) (First) (Middle) _____
 - 7 Your Nationality(ies): _____
 8. Religion: _____
 9. Number of children in your family of origin: _____
 10. Your birth order in the family (oldest, second, etc.): _____
 11. Age and grade when you began school: _____
 12. Number of school grades completed: _____
 13. Number of college years completed: _____ Degrees earned: _____
 14. How old were you when you left school or college?: _____
Why did you leave?: _____
 15. Who lived with you when you were growing up (parents, brothers & sisters, other?): _____
 16. How old were you when you moved out of your parents' or guardian's home? _____ Why did you move? _____
 17. How old were you when first employed outside the home?: _____
 18. Were you still living with parents or brothers & sisters when first employed?: _____ If not, please explain: _____
 19. Place and/or what kind of work did you do? _____

LIFE COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

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20. Why did you go to work? (reason, purpose, goal, etc.):

21. How long did you work there?:

22. If you changed jobs, why?:

How many times did you change jobs?:

23. What and/or where was your longest job & for how long?:

24. In what year and how old were you when you retired?: 19 / Yrs. old

25. Why did you retire?:

26. How old were you when you got married (the first time, if more than once)?: Date of marriage?:

27. Where did you live during the first few years of marriage?:

City, etc.?:

House, apt., etc.?

28. How many children did you have, if any?:

29. If married more than once, how old were you when you got married the second time?:

30. How many children did you have from the second marriage, if any?:

31. How old were you when you first experienced the death of an immediate family member (parent, brother or sister, grandparent, or child)?:

32. Name one local (Flint or Genesee County area) or world event which has taken place during your lifetime and has somehow had a personal effect on you:

33. Name a personal experience that has had a significant effect on you or made a difference in your life:

34. In one word (or a few) describe how you think your life has been overall (happy, sad, challenging, etc.):

35. Feel free to add any comment, piece of information, etc. that you would like to add:

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