

Dottie McGahagin

Hillsborough Remembers

Dottie McGahagin was a young child during the Depression and tells of the struggles of her father to feed a family of six. During WWII, she worked her way through Florida State University, and remembers campus blackouts, gasoline rationing and other events of the wartime home front.

WWII
At Home & Abroad

[START TAPE 1, SIDE A]

This is Hahn Oh (HO), with an interview with Dottie McGahagin (DM). It is November 29, and we are in the H.B. Plant High School Media Center. And we will be discussing topics regarding the Depression and World War II.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on]

HO: *Tape One, Side One. OK, how old were you during the Depression?*

DM: I was born in '22, and the Depression, you know, came along in the end of '29. And it was all during the '30s. And things were still tough at the end of the '30s. And then I graduated from high school and got into the '40s- January of '40. And there was no way to go to school, or to college, or anything else. Jobs were scarce, and I started working at a grocery store (). This is not great money: I made nine dollars a week and--, to get enough money to go to school.

HO: *OK, could you describe some of the difficulties you and your family went through?*

DM: Well, my daddy was a finish carpenter, and there was no construction going on at that time at all. And--. Yeah. And so we did everything we could. He did everything he could to provide for his family. And we already had a home. It wasn't quite finished,

but anyway, he contracted to buy this home and buy this lot. He was building on it because he was contracted to do that. But things were tough and we--. It was hard to get enough food for four people in the family, and we had a total of six.

And, so anyway, we did everything--, he did everything he could-- he and my mom. And she--, he couldn't get a job building homes and things like that. So anyway, he got him a cow, got a cow, and raised that cow. And we had to take that cow around and--, because there wasn't any grass in our area, and he wasn't able to do it anyway. But we had to go find pasture grass. So we had to take that cow by, by chain and go take it () blocks away and put it there every day- go and change it and bring it back home (). But that provided us milk.

And when we bought--, my daddy bought chickens, bought baby chickens called biddies. And then we raised those--, he raised those chickens, he and my momma did. And so we had eggs that way, and we had chickens to eat. And then he, then he planted a garden. And he had a garden, you know, () so we had good field peas and beans to eat and things like that. We had the tomatoes. We had a good diet, a very good diet.

But it was hard, and mom--, my momma, my momma stayed home. She was a home momma. And we had--, she had those four children to take care of. Now her sisters ()

in a cigar factory. (), and my momma did the washing and the ironing for those two, for those two () sisters that were over there. So she earned a little bit of money that way. And we had no hot water and (). And we had a great big wash tub that we put down on the ground and built a fire under that, to have the hot water to do those clothes. You did have a wringer washing machine (). And so anyway, those were some of the things we did, my momma and her working.

We didn't go to that--, we didn't go to the store to buy bread. My momma baked it. She baked one time a week, and that was good, that homemade bread. She didn't have electricity or electrical stove. We had a wood stove, which took a lot of watching to keep up the wood in there, and the fire going, and the things from burning on the stove, because when you put the wood in there, it would get too hot. And it would boil fast and, and whatever. And so anyway, we didn't have a kerosene stove for a long time. We had an ice box so that ice man () came around. He had a big block of ice. I don't know how many times, but-- () not electrical, and so you had to keep watching the food and everything (); did a lot of canning and things like that. So it was a hard time at that time.

HO: OK. So you had to give up a lot up things.

DM: Oh yeah. We were--. We had to--. My sister () two years older, and she walked; she had to get a ride to her high school. It was about four miles from our house, and they didn't have buses, didn't have school bus. And I got to the start of my (); they gave us a school bus. So anyway, when I graduated from Hillsborough in January of '40, we did have a school bus. So I could ride the school bus. But if we wanted to do any kind of activity in the afternoon, the bus would leave right after school. And then you had to find your way home most of the while.

And so anyway, we'd ride a streetcar. And we would ride the streetcar (). And I want to be in that drill team that performed in Plant (), and to do that I had to stay after school. And () I stayed after school to practice so I could be in that drill team, be on that field at Thanksgiving time. But I want (). And so to do that, I had to do it by myself and nobody was with me. And I had to ride three streetcars to get home. I'd ride one streetcar, and then transfer to another one, transfer to another one, and then walk a long mile home to do that. But I did it because I wanted to do it very much. It was like--, it was cheap to ride the streetcar. You could ride it for, for--. It cost adults five cents, but we could get a whole booklet for-- , two for a nickel and () tickets. And so we could get on that for two and a half cents, and we could ride all the way to () the causeway, if you wanted to- Ballast Point.

HO: Right. OK--

DM: So those were some of the things when you didn't have money, and you didn't have a car. And I got home from Tallahassee, and I got a job teaching. And I didn't have a car, and I had--. By that time, at the end of '40--, '44, they had a bus line going down Nebraska Avenue. I'd go out there and catch a bus, and go to school on the bus to teach school.

HO: *So with all the, the, hardships and what not your, your family was going through, how were the people around you coping?*

DM: They were, they were having tough times too, and nobody locked the doors. Nobody stole from anybody. I had--. After I graduated from school, and then I bought my home. And then I went on a business vacation. Didn't find a key or whatever- I knew I had one, and--. But anyway, I now--, I knew that if I were afraid for my belongings in my house, I could find a way to make a key and lock it up. It wasn't locked up () while I went on out of town to another state--all over the United States. Never locked the door for three days. That's the difference. Nobody stole from anybody, and even if you would lock--. You had a screen door and you weren't air cond--, had no air conditioning. And you had a screen door, but you wouldn't even latch that. And it wouldn't have stopped anybody anyway if they wanted to come in. A little screen door (). No.

HO: *[Chuckle] Wow. It's so much different now.*

DM: Oh yes. Oh yes.

HO: *Did you notice any other community involvement during this time?*

DM: Oh yes, we have--, we had playgrounds. And that could help people like me, because I was athletic, and I wanted to go to that playground. I wanted to get on those teams and play, and the only kinds of teams that play (). You get on those playgrounds---. And then we had a couple in town like Jack's (). And so therefore, we'd go pick up different players all over the county. And we formed a team, and we played the Jack's (). And they'd play against (); maybe go to Pinellas County and play somebody over there, over in St. Petersburg. So we had that. And we had a civic club out in Jackson Heights, where the people went, and went to meetings and come a little entertained, but not much. We went to the playground, and we played there. And we had () softball tournaments for all ages. It could be for the older men, or young students or whatever, and, and young people. That's () for free.

HO: *Right. Did you have any sort of fears during this time- you, yourself?*

DM: *[Pause] Not really. No, I didn't have a lot of fears, except I did when I was playing on one of those teams one night. So we*

went and played somewhere in another part of the city or the county, and I came back. But I, I didn't want to ask those people to drive me home, so I walked home a mile from that bus stop; I caught a streetcar. I was afraid- people stopping, kind of slowing down.

HO: Right.

DM: And I had (). I had to walk to school. We walked to school; it was over a mile. And we () railroad track. And my idea was to get on that railroad track at Lake Avenue, and walk all the way down there to 21st Avenue to Franklin School, and not fall off. And I did [Chuckle]. I had good coordination, in other words.

HO: Right. And so with all the financial problems, how did you get to college?

DM: Well, it was hard. I got out and I didn't even have a guidance counselor.

HO: Yeah.

DM: () guidance counselor. And so I knew how to go to work, so I went to work in a grocery store. But then I could hear the people. I knew they had gone off to college, and I knew (). But they also offered scholarships if you want to be a teacher. But you had to sign up that you would work in the state of Florida and pay back for every year. If you got a year of scholarship-- teacher's scholarship up at Florida State--

then you had to promise that you'd come back. Now I'm thinking, "I'm promising my future away. That's like buying something on credit." And I wouldn't take it.

So I went and earned that money. And I thought \$200 would get me there and keep me there for a whole year. Well, it didn't, because one semester cost like \$167, everything included- room, board, fee. And if you wanted to buy--, get a book--. I knew I couldn't buy the book, but on the little bulletin board they would say, "() book for rent. Fifty cents for a year, quarter for a semester." I'd go find that person, and I would rent her book for a quarter. And that's how I got the books.

And so anyway--. But still, never even thought about college. And many Hillsborough High School person used to handle in charge of all the student activities. We ran across somebody that knew him and said, "How's Dottie () doing?" They say, "Oh, she's working out there in the grocery store at 34th Street and 7th Avenue." He says, "Tell her to come see me."

So my sister and I went over there to see him, and he said, "You want to go to school?" And I said, "Yeah." He says, "I'll work on it." He called the Dean of Students at Florida State and they said, "Well, we can't give her a Dining Room Scholarship because it's too hard the first year at Florida State." It was very tough then. Freddy says, "I can get her a job as assistant to a

dormitory director, an upper class dormitory." And I said, "I'll take it."

So I went, and I think we got fifteen cents an hour, for working like for NY--. There's a name for it, NYC, NY--. () National Youth Administration. () about fifteen cents an hour. Well, I didn't realize that you had those little expenses. And they took those--, my little expenses, and they took that \$200 away. And when it came time for that second semester, I didn't have any money. So I wrote a () letter home. () somebody could go around that family and get enough money so I could stay in school. So anyway, the money came forward. And so that got me--. Then, then I got the Dining Room Scholarship; () all fees are paid. All you have to do is get through that first year.

So anyway, I, I carried trays, and we () at Florida State. I did that for three years, and so that--, there was no problem with () finances after that. Other girls were--, they were () folks owned fruit groves and everything. And they were paying by sending the fruit up there, or they were sending the vegetables up there so they could go to school. But I worked my way through it with the Dining Room Scholarship. And then I didn't owe anything after I got out.

But it was tough, and we-- my roommate and I--. They had no buses in Tallahassee. You had to walk. So anyway, we'd walk to town. There was a bakery there. And so

anyway, we'd go in that bakery, and we would buy a pastry. And it would cost five cents. And one day, she would go in and she'd have to pay for three. And then we'd divide it up, give you half of that pastry, and walk back to college. The next time she paid the three. The next time it's my pay--, time to pay the three, and she paid the two. Now that's how tight things were. I didn't bring that money. I kept a booklet, a little tablet on everything that I spent my freshman year. And () every penny down. At any rate, \$200 didn't make it through the whole year; I was short. But I made it through [Chuckle]. Things are different aren't they?

HO: Yes.

DM: [Laughter]

HO: OK, so when exactly did the war start? Like, where were you?

DM: Where was I?

HO: Were you in high school or were you in college?

DM: Well, I was in college.

HO: Mm hmm.

DM: And a group of us-- physical education people-- we decided that Martha Graham--. She's the famous modern dancer, and she was putting a performance up there in

Rome, Georgia. And so we walked around and talked around that town 'til we got one of the girls in the group from Tallahassee who had a boyfriend who had a car. And we loaded that car. We went up to Rome, Georgia to see Martha Graham dance. Now I've seen her dance recently; I heard her dance group dance. But--, and she, she died; she lived up to a long age. And we went all the way to Rome, Georgia and spent the night in people's cabins and whatever. So we wouldn't--. Nothing would cost us but the gas to help that guy drive us up there. And on the way back, we all had the radio on and it tells me, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed". That's where I was-riding home from Rome, Georgia on a trip to Tallahassee. And it was my freshman year [Pause] because it was it was December--. No, it was my sophomore year.

HO: *So like, Pearl Harbor, that was--*

DM: December 7th, 1941.

HO: '41.

DM: Yep.

HO: *When it started, when US first entered the war, do you remember that far back?*

DM: Well, those, those fellows--. I remember the freshman year, and all those fellows were being trained. They would come by; that was the place to train fellows,

up there at Tallahassee and Carrabelle, Florida--

HO: *Mmm hmm.*

DM: --() on the beach, and I've got some articles on that. And they were going for training and everything, and that was the first year. And so we were preparing and (). We had a shipyard. We had that shipyard going here. That made the difference in our lives- in our pa--, family's lives. Sister--, or Daddy () got a job in the shipyard. And before, my daddy didn't have any job; he just did odd jobs. He was a finish carpenter, and there wasn't any construction going on. But when that shipyard opened-- and it opened up in the late '30s-- well, he got a job, and he was making something like \$40 a week! Money! Good money! When you had no money, forty's a good, good amount.

And so anyway, then that made everything different here. People could go in there and, and get a job. And, and a lot of women did, too. That's when the women started to work out of the home. () shipyard. And they became the riveters, and the welders, and the shipwrights, and the Moloch people. My husband worked in the Moloch.

HO: *When you were in college and in high school, what were some of the views on the war? Were people, in the most part, for the war or against the war?*

DM: (). Well, all my family is for the war, and I had a lot of cousins that every--, that went. And in the family, the in-laws were () my family. The two sons were over there, and they fought the big battles, like the Battle of the Bulge or whatever. And their daddy died while they were over there. They were in different units and whatever. They wouldn't let them come home, but they did let them get together over there, which was good. But nobody came home for a furlough or anything else. And my sister's husband was in the Navy, and he was--, he got a commission in the service.

HO: *Wow.*

DM: There. There! Not here, not going to the college here. Not going there, there, there and getting a degree. He was commissioned.

HO: *Um--*

DM: Unusual.

HO: *Right. Definitely.*

DM: Definitely.

HO: *Did you notice any types of propaganda in your communities? Any examples you can remember?*

DM: Oh, it's world war, and that's all I remember. I know we'll always have people on both sides. And then there are

isolationists, and they wanted to stay away, but--

HO: For the most part?

DM: For the most part they got it (). () thought that something needed to be done. And those men would run into that recruiting station to sign up. You believe they'd lie about their age?

HO: *Wow.*

DM: People that lied about their age would be fourteen or fifteen, and get something-- and everybody checks the birth certificate, and they think they were older-- to get in. They weren't running away.

HO: *Wow.*

DM: Trying to get in.

HO: *So do you notice any difference in war involvement between Tallahassee and Tampa?*

DM: Do I notice a difference in what? In the involvement?

HO: *In the war involvement.*

DM: Well, I was so involved in Florida State, and we were--, we were involved in the war effort and we had our black-outs.

HO: *Mm hmm.*

DM: And the whole, the whole campus would be blacked out. And we had those servicemen come to Tallahassee. And they changed the rule on us. We used to have to have 2 people to go to town. Ooh, and after those men came, we had to have 4. And then he--. It was just like that! Oh, we're going to have 2,000 out here. They had had a, a field outside of Tallahassee.

HO: Mm hmm.

DM: And they call this MacDill; they call that Dale Mabry. () a road leading to () that's Dale Mabry here. And we were involved in the war effort. And, and one of our groups, it was the (). And one of our projects was to do something for those veterans out there- those sick veterans and those people that were coming back hurt. And so there was all these green porches, and not one stick of furniture in them. And so we, we got this project going. And they raised enough money in all those dormitories to furnish that, that sunroom for those soldiers that they could get out of those wards and everything. Yeah, we were involved, and they had the campus--, they had those policemen. What do you call them- the (). And they were there, looking and guarding, and trying to help us stay straight- and the soldiers stay straight, too.

HO: *Did you have any family go to war and fight?*

DM: All of them--. Well, my cousins, and then--. Nothing bad happened to any of them.

HO: *Oh, wow.*

DM: Not one thing bad happened to any of my people. They didn't die, they didn't get hurt, they didn't do anything.

HO: *How did help in the war effort? Did they, did they all fight?*

DM: Oh, they were, they were Navy, they were in the Air Force, they were in everything. But they never, they never got killed.

HO: *Wow, that's great.*

DM: Yeah, yeah. We were just lucky.

HO: *Did you have any friends in the war?*

DM: Yeah, I had friends. All my girls in high school, they all worked there; () worked there. Oh yeah, and we've got a plaque over at Hillsborough High School where we've honored those people, those people that were killed in the war, because those people--. And you know what they did: they, they wanted to go and they were just a few months from graduating. And they went away and they joined up. And then they got back and they told them, "Well, you're too old for this," or "You've got to get a note-" whatever. They weren't welcomed back and

said, "Hey, war's over, and you're four or five years older or whatever, while we welcome you back." And we're going--. You think that they would give up a little, give them that diploma, or help them ().

And so we had a () reunion of Hillsborough High School, and a couple of those kids didn't graduate. And they always felt bad about it, and wanted to show they graduated. So somebody got one of those diplomas. And they opened the diploma and they () presenting it to them at one of those big school reunions- for fun, you know what I mean. But it made those men feel better because they had given up part of their life. Yeah. That was beautiful.

HO: *How did the war directly affect your family while you were in college?*

DM: Well, they had a whole kind of rationing, you know. They had, like, sugar rationing.

HO: *Right.*

DM: You had to go get a coupon to go buy some five pounds of sugar.

HO: *Mm hmm.*

DM: And you also--. They, they told us to say grace, say grace. And I told--, asked my sister recently: I said, "Well, what did we do with it?" "Well, we turned it in!" And other people said that they were just doing that to make people feel like they were doing

something for the war effort, you know? (). I don't know. But things were rationed, and you didn't have any tires. Oh, we didn't have any gasoline! And we had gasoline ration coupons.

And I got married when I was a junior at Florida State. I got my husband--. () this fellow that I was in love with, he was going off in the service, and so I got married at Christmas. And he did not have a gallon of gas for us to go to the beach. So we asked around, and we found out that they were selling black market gas, over in Ybor City, and guess what? We went over there and bought a gallon, so that we could go on a honeymoon. Who wants to go on a honeymoon and go to your folks' house and spend the night?

HO: *[Chuckle] I don't know.*

DM: So--. And tires- nobody had any new tires. And during that time, we went down to Miami because my husband was going to be in a wedding of his brother. Brother was in the service and he'd been hurt over there. Oh yeah, we did have a person hurt, but it wasn't a gunshot wound. He was in Iceland. And, and so anyway, they were on some mission, and they were out in the water. And the storm came up, and the thing overturned, and he held onto the sides. I think you call it a gunner; I'm not sure. And held on without gloves--had gloves, he'd lost his gloves-- and he got frostbitten hands. They said, "You're in trouble. We got to send

you into a warmer climate.” So they sent him down to Miami. Right away, they found him a girl down there that wanted to get married.

So anyway, we went down there. And on the way back, all of our tires blew out, and we could not get back to Tampa. So we were stranded out there on some highway with no tires. And my husband got on the phone and called somebody: “Please come rescue us.” We couldn’t even buy a tire; we didn’t know anybody that had a spare. We didn’t have one. So yeah, we had problems, with cars and parts. And everything was always scarce. And women didn’t have any nylons. I didn’t know anything about nylons; didn’t even care anything about them, but others did. They’d go get in a long line because the nylons were going to be sold at so-and-so place, and they’d go line up for a mile to buy their nylons.

HO: So this is still during the time of the Depression?

DM: Yeah!

HO: So that’s why it was so scarce.

DM: Yeah. They just started doing the nylon. () before.

HO: Uh-huh.

DM: Uh-huh. That’s the reason. It was something new, and there wasn’t enough to go around.

HO: So between which years were you in college?

DM: 19--. I went up there in September ’40 and I graduated in May of ’44. And then it--. Then I was in my first year of teaching when the war ended.

HO: Did you--. During this time, do you remember any specific news of the war that you heard?

DM: Oh, I’d read it, but after a while I couldn’t read about those deaths. Every day, it was so many killed, so many killed, so many killed. And you know what, isn’t that awful- after a while you say, “I can’t read that anymore”?

HO: They have a pretty big emotional impact upon you.

DM: Yes. I couldn’t read it anymore. And you were scared that you were going to get the news that somebody that you knew-- because you knew a lot of people in the war effort; there were a lot of-- that they were going to be included in the list that day. It’s awful. But anyway, I was still just trying to get my feet on the ground and do my first year of teaching. And that was hard, hard, riding the bus every day to work.

HO: Right. Is there anything else from, from the college--

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[START TAPE 1, SIDE B]

HO: Is there anything else you remember?

DM: Yes, I do.

HO: College years?

DM: (), yeah, I'll tell you how, how people were, and how there were so many of them that didn't have any money. And--, but see, my daddy was working, and doing the little odd jobs here and there with the, with the garden, and the cow, and the chickens, and whatever. And then he'd try to grow fruit trees and whatever, so they'd have fresh fruit and everything. But other people-- and see, we paid cash for everything-- now, other people would go to the little grocery store in the community, and they'd buy on credit. And then they would go and they'd rent a house, and they'd rent it. And then, every time the rent came due, they would leave and move to another community, and leave that grocer holding the, the, the bill, and, and whatever. () rent and with the groceries.

But you see, my daddy was a different kind, and we paid cash for everything. If we didn't have any money, we didn't go buy on credit; never did. So what we did was we would go

down to Ybor City, which was close to where we lived in Jackson Heights, and we would buy the food and pay for it. We bought it at A&P store, where other people were going little convenience store in the neighborhood, where they'd buy the peanut butter or whatever they wanted that day. But we never did it. We were, we were a cut--. You know, I mean, we just didn't do that; we didn't buy on credit. And my daddy taught us not to ever buy on credit. You're saving money, and then you, you buy.

And one time, we didn't have--. You know they had, had coupons-- shoes--- coupons for shoes. I, I don't think we ever got down to buying our pairs of shoes on coupons. But they did take me to Ybor City, and I remember going in that store. And I got to buy me a pair of shoes. But I had to walk oh, a half-mile, close to a mile to school every day, and I didn't want to wear those new shoes out. I was young.

HO: Uh-huh.

DM: And I () home. And the first big bush that I'd come to, I'd get down and take those new shoes off, and put them in the bush, and walk to school barefooted--

HO: [Chuckle]

DM: --come back home, go in the bush, take the shoes, put them back on and () didn't know it. Of course, I wanted the shoes to last. They were so pretty. I only had one

pair [Laughter]. And then, then the shoe--, then the, then the thing gave out on the bottom of the shoe. We had a last-- I think that's what you call it-- like a, like a, a shoemaker. And then you would go to Ybor City, and you'd buy those little leather things. But this thing was, was worn out. And you'd get that thing and you'd put it on there. And then my daddy would cut this thing onto the old pair of shoes.

HO: Right.

DM: You have got no () what I'm talking about. ().

HO: Well, I understand what you're saying.

DM: [Laughter] Right, that's what we did. And we wore old clothes, and hand-me-downs, and all kinds of things. Now we had the feed sacks, but we got the, the--. Sometimes the feed for the animals or whatever--. And they were called feed sacks, but they had a little figure in them. And Momma saved all those things. And then she got on that sewing machine; she made your underwear out of it.

HO: Ooh.

DM: Flour, they would call them- flour sacks or feed sacks. We still got some; I should've brought one.

HO: [Chuckle]

DM: And you would've laughed, just as you're doing right now. Yeah, my, my sister, I was talking to her and she said, "I've still got one- still got one of those feed sacks."

HO: Really.

DM: Yeah.

HO: [Chuckle]

DM: And she's seventy, so that's probably like seventy-five years old and ().

HO: Wow.

DM: But they were good and strong, and we used them all over. We weren't the only ones. A lot of people did.

HO: OK. When you returned from college, did you come back to Tampa?

DM: Of course.

HO: What was it like to come home? Did you notice any changes from when you were in high school () came back?

DM: Well, I, I was so happy to be in, in college. And when I got there, I was there for two, three weeks. And I cried every day, and I tried to come home. And they kept telling me, "Dottie, don't go over to the business office now; they're too busy. And what they knew was if I stayed there two, three, four, five weeks, I'd be OK. I went

over there filing. I finally got over there, and I asked them to give me my money back. I said, "It's been so many weeks and everything and () want to go home." They said, "We're not going to give you your money back." And I said, "Well, I'm staying then." I tried to come home.

HO: *Mm hmm.*

DM: And so I came home, and jobs were hard to get. And I took that hard job over there on Columbus Drive at George Washington Junior High School. And I had a hard year the first year. They put me through fire. I was () some of them seventeen, and I was twenty-one, you know?

HO: *Right.*

DM: They were mean, ornery, and I learned to love every one of them. Loved every one of them; didn't want to leave, whatever. But yes, it was hard. It wasn't easy. But then I was out on my own. I was married, and I was home. () get an apartment, and, and do those little things from year to year to year. And finally--. But I've been living in my own house now for fifty years- same house. And one good thing about my life was that my--, see, my family never moved. And so when I went to elementary school, I went there six years. I went to Plant, and then I moved over to (). Then I went to Hillsborough and everything too. I went up to Florida State, and I lived there for four.

Never moved one time- stable, stable, stable community.

HO: *So when you came home, you were, you were teaching?*

DM: I was teaching.

HO: *Right away?*

DM: Right away, I got a job.

HO: *So when you came home--*

DM: I didn't make any money.

HO: *Oh, you didn't?*

DM: Where's my paper? I just had it [Hear the shuffling of papers]. ()! Now, this wasn't my first year, but I just went to the car in the last five minutes before I got here. And I pulled this out. And this was not my first year, but what does it say, 100 and--

HO: *136?*

DM: Right, that was for nine months, so we had to stretch your nine months out for twelve. It ended up about 90--. \$95 a month is what I made to live on after I went to sc--, college for four years. Know how cheap that is, how little that is? Hard.

HO: *That's really rough.*

DM: That was hard.

HO: *When you came home, do you remember what was going on in the war, in the war?*

DM: Oh yes; oh yes. I was living in an apartment with my husband. And we were talking, and listening, and, and knowing all about it, and hoping that--, because his brother was in the Navy, remember, up there in Iceland. And, and it's funny but, you know, I went back to Iceland- I went to visit. And I got up there, and we were on a bus. And I was telling them: I said, "They ()". And they go, "Why ()? Why did you come? Why did you come to see Iceland?" I said, "Well, because my, my husband's brother was stationed here during the war." "Oh no, we never had any Americans stationed here during the war." () the tour guide--

HO: *Right.*

DM: --which was pretty sad. But anyway, we did go back to Iceland and (). It was still hard. School was tough-- very hard-- but you did the baptism of fire. You, you had to make home visits in going to those homes, and really having trouble with (). () make friends and talk to them; see if you can't get some help here. No equipment- it was wartime; there was no equipment. You had the volleyball, and you're playing the game out there. And you're twenty feet from Columbus Drive. The volleyball goes out there and gets run over, you don't have a volleyball. Then you have to adjust that

program. And besides that, I taught physical education to seventh, eighth and ninth. And I've had seventh with ninth, and ninth was more advanced than seventh. () some of those classes were 70 in the class.

HO: *Wow.*

DM: Seventy. And you would have the ninth grade for five times a week, but you'd have the eighth grade for three, and you'd have the seventh grade for two. And they were all at different stages. You try to figure out the math. Do a unit here; start one here. Oh no, well they (). They already have that skill. What are we going to do? Huh? But I remember I had an intern, and she'd gone to Florida State. And then, then they started doing interning. Instead of interning up at Florida State () schools, they sent them out into the community.

So anyway, I had an int--, I had a, I had a girl. I had several interns. And so she came down, and we put on a show at old George Washington. We had 200 students in that show. We put a May-Day Festival on; we dressed those kids. We made--, we taught them how to do--, my intern taught them how to a, a military drill that they had never seen before. She did the military drill (), and I did the Virginia Reel and the square dancing. And we dressed them in all those costumes; they all had to be dressed, except the Spanish--, I mean the Mexican Hat Dance. They had to have a different thing with the sombreros and (). And, and we--,

I had the--. The, the good one was the--.
Oh, what was it? ().

Anyway, I said to those ninth grade boys,
"You will wear the knickers. And they're
going to come to here, and they're going to
have a little ribbon on it. And you are going
to wear the thing with the French--, with the
French Curl, and satin britches, and--. Mm
hmm. Yes you will." And we had (). And
they danced, and they did the minuet
[Hums]. And we'd talked about all that stuff
that, you know, they didn't want to do it--,

HO: Right.

DM: --but they did it. And so we raised
money to help the school. That's what we
did, and we--. The woman that was
supposed to do the uniforms, her momma
died. So that threw the uniforms on us,
besides teaching all the dances, and all the
drills, and all that. We had the clothing. But
you know what, we did it. Those are some
of the tough things we did: raising money
and finding out different things in the school--
different projects that were going on,
different areas that needed help.

HO: And what, what year, around?

DM: Oh, that was 1944 to '48. All those
things would go in--. I still (). I still got
those old programs. I still (). It's all true
because I got proof.

HO: Right.

DM: I'm not making any of it up. But I tell
you one other thing: (). "Did you do
anything else besides teach?" And up at
Florida State, we learned--, we took a
camping course. And we came home, and
we found out that they didn't have any
private counseling out in the area. So we
decided to make one. We'll build one.

So a roommate--, a classmate of mine at
Florida State and I decided to build a camp.
And so we stayed in Florida over, and we
found property. We bought the property;
everybody said, "You're getting robbed. You
shouldn't pay more than 5,000, and you're
going to pay 8,000 for those forty acres?"
Well, we did. So every day from there you--.
"OK, now, now!" to make us change hands.

We built that camp, had family working in
that camp, had the septic tanks filled, the
cabins built, the land cleared, the--,
everything ready, did the brochures,
promoted the camp, filled the camp, hired
the counselors, and ran a private camp for
boys and girls in the state of Florida. And it
had--, never had been done before.

HO: Now this was just you and...?

DM: And this lady. She didn't have any
family, and I had family. So anyway, we did
that for fifteen years, day and night. And
then I () still going today. Steinbrenner's
got his hand in it. You ever hear of
Steinbrenner?

HO: Yes!

DM: OK.

HO: ().

DM: Of course you have. Anyway, so that's what I did for fifteen years, besides teaching school. Then I would go off and work on that in the afternoons as soon as that school bell--. And you know how school kids would leave. Well, then we would go and recruit campers all over the state of Florida- St. Pete, Sarasota, Bradenton, and whatever. And so that's what we did for fifteen years while I was teaching school.

HO: *When news of the end of the war reached you, how old were you, and where were you? Do you remember that?*

DM: () I was at school. I was at school, and it was my first year teaching school. And it was like in May. It was almost before the end of that school year, my first year teaching. And then the war was over.

HO: *Do you remember some of the reactions around you?*

DM: Oh, and everybody was screaming and dancing, and dancing in the street, and, and, or--, everything. It was just a jubilant time.

HO: *What were some of the other reactions you remember?*

DM: Well, I didn't have anybody, you know, that was in danger at that time, but anyway-- . Oh, oh, I was so excited, and, and elated, and happy, but--. And see, I had a husband and he wasn't in the war, so anyway--. Mine--, my reaction was different than others'.

HO: *So the environment was very jubilant.*

DM: Yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. And then we done things to honor those people that were lost in Hillsborough. ().

HO: *How did things change for you after the war- for the community--,*

DM: Oh, well!

HO: --your family, and yourself.

DM: Well anyway, I didn't bring one, but I didn't bring another one. But anyway, this is before long, we were making 2,900, or 290, and this was like 36. It was 290- making a lot of money. Never did make a lot of money teaching school, because I remember going out with the, with the camp. And for nine years, I went out with the camp and did that full time. And I came back, and I was making \$3,000 a year. And that was way up there in the '50s, probably- never did make a lot of money.

HO: So--

DM: But I still love the teaching.

HO: Right, () job.

DM: I love the teaching.

HO: Right. So really, the--, your salaries are the only things that really changed.

DM: Yeah!

HO: Any community differences? Anything change around the community? Family ().

DM: Well, I could see the difference in the children because all of a sudden, they were getting the air conditioning.

HO: Right.

DM: And we had none, you know, early. And we had all the windows open. And everybody had a porch, and they had those big rocking chairs. They'd sit on the porch and wave, and talk to people walking by, and everything. That all changed.

Soon as they got that air conditioning in there--. And those kids- you couldn't drive them to Seminole Playground to play now in that playground. And all I could think of was (), because you had a ball and a glove there to play with. And, and you could be there with people that liked to be happy. And then when my kids grew up, when my niece and nephew, and then they--. You couldn't drive them to the playground.

That's how things change. And people started closing up, buying the houses that were closed up that would be good for air conditioning. And they () neighborhood (), and the whole thing changed. The whole thing changed. So now you don't know ().

I worked for those Crime Watch, and I worked for American Diabetes, and I work for the Heart Walk for the Heart Fund. () knock on the doors and say "Hi!" But you see, they're all locked up in their house, and the dogs are in there barking at me. You know, and I'm thinking like this, "They're going to get me, you know. One of those is going to break through that screen; they're going to come get me and there's not going to be anything there."

But anyway, they don't know your neighbors, you know. We're next door. () that's how things are different. The kids are not out there running and playing like we did, riding the bicycles and running around, and getting a game of, of softball to play, or something like that- just stopped doing it. They're in there playing their computers.

HO: Right. So, do you have--. Would you like to describe any emotions during this time? Do you remember any?

DM: Things were hard. And you were trying to buy a house. And, and you had to decide whether you wanted that car for \$200, or whether you wanted to pay off that mortgage for your house. And the mortgages were

like--, I think it was like \$63, and the other one was 69. And so there were two mortgages on the house, because () had a GI loan on it. And so, anyway, () I was trying to pay one of those off, so I could get that mortgage down to \$63 a month () mortgage. And they worked for weeks to, to pay the mortgage on the house. So it was hard. It wasn't easy.

And when--, and so, I had that camp. And I was working year-round. I'd worked and I'd closed that school, and then I'd go out to that camp and open it. And then that dirty camp would have to be closed; I'd have to clean it. I'd have to go back to that school. And by that time, that place was dirty, and I had to clean it. And so it was continual cleaning and whatever.

And what did you do for recreation? Well, you'd go up to Chassawiscka and get in a boat and try to catch a fish. But as for the big vacations, I didn't have one for fifteen years. Didn't have one vacation because I couldn't- had the camp.

HO: Right.

DM: And when the camp (), I was in school. And you see, I love school so much that I taught school for 41½ years. And I waited till I was 70½ to retire. And I decided I was going to retire before they wanted me to retire. () love those kids. I even miss the bells ringing. You know, I miss the kids

like crazy, because I told somebody, "I even miss the bells ringing."

HO: Now how long was that () when you retired?

DM: Well, not long; I'm seventy-seven now. I retired January the 1st --, January the 3rd of '93. So it's not a big deal.

HO: () anything else? [Pause] Anything you remember about the war, maybe?

DM: [Pause] No, but those fellows that came back--. It changed the teaching profession-- the war-- because when they came back, all those fellows--, everyone can go to college.

HO: Wow.

DM: And how we struggled to go. And of course, everybody in town wasn't struggling: the people from Plant. I went home--, I went up on a bus. I was the only one from Hillsborough High School that went to Florida State that day. Every other one was from Plant High.

HO: Wow.

DM: They had () gorgeous outfits on. They knew how to do everything. They got in there, and they took those shoes off, and put on some comfortable shoes, and stayed in (). I'm sitting up there like a (). I didn't know one person on that bus. But of course, I met a lot of them, and they're my

best friends. And so their two Hillsborough people got to go. I don't know why. Maybe they didn't have the desire.

But I had, I had an idea that there was something out there in the world for me, and it just wasn't (). And, and I met wonderful people up there. And we had such a close friendship and relationship. We still get together. We--, I still take a bus up there-- couple of weeks ago to the game. Still go up there. We've given a scholarship to Florida State for people who need help, and they will promise that they will, you know, teach in the state of Florida. But those people--.

And we saw, we saw so many things up there that happened, like one of our friends' brother was killed. And she went home for that funeral. And her brother-- () other brother-- was () came home for that funeral. On the way back, he was killed. So she lost two brothers in a week or two. We had those kinds of traumas up there all the time.

There were some people that were getting married, and I decided I was going to get married while I was in college. They said, "Well, we're going to put you over there with the mature students." I said, "I'm not any more mature than I was yesterday, and I'm not going to do that. Now, I'm going to be a Junior Counselor; I'm going to be one. But if you're going to put me over there with the mature students--" (Because I figured thirty

year-old people were ninety, you know?) [Laughter]. I wasn't going to live with them, so they relented on that. I thought they'd take my scholarship away-- my Flo--, my Dining Room Scholarship--, but they didn't. () great friendships, and we suffered through the years together, all the war. It was like three of our four years were war years. (). That's about all I know.

HO: *That it?*

DM: Yeah, you want to hear more? No, you don't want to hear more. You've heard enough. How long did we talk?

HO: ().

DM: ().

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]