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Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## Mr. Alford Dorsey

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Mr. Dorsey to start, what was the first thing that you recall of the depression?

Mr. Dorsey: Well I was about 12 years old, maybe 13 and we heard the crashed that hit Delaware and I was learning my trade with my dad and we went down the Tenth and Market because everybody was going to the bank to get their money out of the bank. And we drove down to Tenth and Market. And all I remember is there was people out in front of the banks, the one we can trust, the Delaware trust in the street all over the place. There wasn't any – many automobiles in those days, you know. But the people were frantic just want their money. And my dad didn't have a whole lot of money, but he was down, curious to see what was going on because it was on the radio. And it was quite an impressive thing to see.

I didn't quite understand what was going on but everybody was after their money just running and looking hard and pushing and the doors are closed. And that's the first impression I got what it meant that we're having the depression.

Interviewer: What did your father hear on the radio?

Mr. Dorsey: I don't know. Of course I was just a curious kid. Taking out of school at the age of, in my mind I was 12 or 13, seventh grade to put the work to learn my trade, to help raise the rest of the kids you know. There were nine of us and I just went along with him just like a little puppy dog, curious, didn't know why we were going there, but I found out right away. But when you're one of nine kids, you know that they take you out of school just like a new helper every year as time get worst in those days, your brothers and all came out behind you. They were lucky they – times get better, he would keep me in the school as long as he could, but there was five of us, I know that was taken down at school at a young age.

Interviewer: It is because of the depression?

Mr. Dorsey: Because of the depression.

Interviewer: Have you been taken out anyway.

Mr. Dorsey: Not necessarily, I don't think so. My dad believed in education, but raising nine kids, he had to have some help. He couldn't afford to hire anybody and we were of course all boys and I was happy to get out of school. That was a great thing you know. And I think that's the great thing that I didn't get out of school because God know what I could have turned out a bit, a truck driver or anything. But I enjoyed it and I liked it and I felt like a big man when I was 13.

Interviewer: And what year were you taken out of school?

Mr. Dorsey: Well I'm 55 now. And I was taken out of school when I was 13. So you have to do the addition for me?

Interviewer: 29, 30?

Mr. Dorsey: It was in – I think it was the '28, 1928.

Interviewer: That was before the crisis.

Mr. Dorsey: Just before the crisis. The crisis was coming on because I didn't know why I had to go to work. I mean I was glad to get out of school because in those days, if you went to school, every morning, we'd go to my dad's room and reaching his pocket and get his change and we divide up among the nine of us need to have maybe nine cents a piece or eight cents and we went to Warner School. And you'd walk from 13th DuPont Street all across the Brandywine *[inaudible]* *[0:03:40]*. They obviously bridged the Warner School and we have a sandwich and some cakes. And the nickel was for soup. We buy a soup with a nickel or a candy bar, but that was our big thing. I had a younger brother. He'd buy one with a morning nude every morning. With his two cents he would buy morning nude and do without the soup. And if we didn't like the same, each of us were kind of embarrassed, the other children would have 50 cents especially if you work for the railroad and they were on the pension and everybody was working, it was a different story. They could buy their lunches and we were sort of embarrassed. We'd throw our lunches over the bridge and wouldn't eat any lunch because we didn't want to look like we were poor and couldn't buy the lunch like we used to buy. They came on gradually, slow but gradually.

Interviewer: What trading, was it the plumbing trading?

Mr. Dorsey: Plumbing business yeah.

Interviewer: He was having hard times through the '20s?

Mr. Dorsey: Well he was in the biggy – run a big business, did school work in hospitals and some of the biggest building in Delaware.

[0:04:55]

But when the depression hit, everything stopped completely and you just did whatever you could do. Like I was repairing rust when I was 13 years old digging ditches, painting people's houses, doing anything and I remember carrying tools in a basket on a bicycle and my dad would walk to the job. He'd have two or three sons there with him one job and he did it for practically nothing. And half of what he was making my mother was giving away the neighbors that we're in the same foot. It was really something to see I tell you.

Interviewer: Now, what was the final situation as the depression end up worst?

Mr. Dorsey: It just seemed like – it was always finances after that. My mother was saying "Oh, the metropolitan man is here today," or the, "Milk man, we got to give him some money." And he said, "Oh, my God, I can't keep up with it." And they would never fight but it was always finances, finances, finances and you have two cases of milk sitting in your front step everyday and the milk man, he was in the same position, had to collect for it and if you couldn't pay him every week, you pay him as you could. One man got paid this week and the other man got paid the following week and it went on like that.

I remember as it grew on, as the time went on, cars were left in the garage without license, paid for or not, the finance companies didn't want them back. And I've seen the time as we got older, when we're 18, if you went to a dance or a prom in high school, we were invited. Somebody was graduating. My brother would go to a graduation in the afternoon and I wear the same suit and shoes in the evening to a dance, those sorts of things but we were happy.

You could buy a dozen cans of big beans for 25 cent. You could buy gasoline for I think it was eights cents a gallon, five cents a gallon. In the winter time, we would use kerosene in your radiator instead of anti-freeze because it wouldn't freeze, but it would rot your hoses off if you left it in there too long, so things of that nature. And everybody around you was in the same predicament, but the only people that seem to have everything was people that work for the railroad or on pensions, they seem to go on just the same. It seemed to me it hadn't hit them yet, but as it went on for years and years and years, it seemed to me like it went

on for a lifetime. It finally hit them too. But they were the people on pension that were keeping the poor people or the people that didn't have a pension of any kind who are working for an hourly wage, you see what I mean? In other words contracts stopped, buildings stopped, everything stopped. It was quite something to go through I would tell you. I wouldn't be afraid if we had a depression tomorrow morning, I would know how to survive. It wouldn't be any problem. And I almost wish it sometime it would – it would happen to bring this country down to earth again to straighten the people out because we are spoiled really.

And I've been successful in my business, but only through hard work, but I don't feel as though I owe myself anything for it. I think as hard as I have worked with the lack of education that I have earned everyday and the thing I have earned the hard way. And I can hardly thank anybody but only the facts that God has given me to survive. And you keep surviving. You think you're never secure. I'm never secure. I have never been secure, I don't think I have ever will be with a million dollars.

Interviewer: Is that the quality you've got from the depression?

Mr. Dorsey: I'm quite sure, yeah, oh yeah. I'll never be secure. And I can take months off without work if I want, bother what I want, do what I want, but I'm always in fear of another depression. I'm afraid we're going to have it. I can just see it in everyday talk.

Interviewer: That's one of the question, is it the end and I'd like to get one of the things first. Did your mother or father have to do anything that might seem out of the ordinary to keep the family?

**[0:09:58]**

Oh, yeah. My dad kept our, I don't know what you call it, he kept our character like they were important. My mother was a college girl and raised – she's born and raised on a nice family with money. And she was educated and my dad was a high school graduate. He knew his business and cocky as he could be. He knew his plumbing business and he had seven brothers like I do that were all master mechanics plasters, plasters and lead burners and plumbers from the old school and he was quite proud.

And my mother was quite a lady and he thought he put her on a pedestal and it was embarrassing to him. But he would never let you know it that he – you know, he was up against it. He was so proud he would never give in for a second. And my poor mother would cut suits up, shirts,

pants, make them fit the nine kids, talk about hand me downs, I could wear the same suit on a Sunday that I wore the following Tuesday to a prom if I could go and get 25 cents to buy the corsage. And you walked to a dance. But my dad never gave up his being proud, you know. He would never give up or let himself down where he would be kicked down so low, he wouldn't work or drink or any, he would never drink or nothing. And my mother, he kept her like a lady and the nine kids look like a million bucks too. There are efforts behind close doors to keep them that way, proud as hell. That's great.

Interviewer: Did that get so bad that there was even a fraud that's going on in the system?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, yes quite often. But I don't know, God took care of us one way or the other, but it wasn't a widow that had money, would come around with clothes that are sun that never knew or felt the depression, she would come around with his clothing and gave it to us, shoes, shirts, pants, or even bring food, turkey or things of that nature. But they could never bring it in like they were being kind to us and given us something. It had to be given to us in a manner that it was pride. It was not – we're not giving you anything out, we owe it to you, you see what I mean? That sort of thing.

Yeah, I went many a house to took food over to them and I think maybe once in my life, he may have had help, but it was due to my mother sending one of the children down to get the food or something. It was so embarrassing to us. We were all proud. We die first, but a lot of people – and those days were just being getting everything they wanted without working. If the parents were running up to keep the family together, but I know I had an older brother that he would sit around seven strapping young men as we got older sitting around the front porch in my dad with no place to go and nothing to do, able bodied young men. And the older boys would go to hitch hike to Florida. Just where it was warm and get jobs at bell hops or anything. And I listen to their stories and it was really something, you know. And I'm only three years younger but I was paid for. I stuck, stayed home, worked for dad, you're not getting any money for it.

When I was 21 years old, we work 60 hours a week and get \$21, 70 hours a week. But first I got \$4 a week, 18, 19 years old for 70 hours a week. And if you didn't have it, you didn't get it and you didn't ask why. I tell you, you got more money you ever had in your life right now and it wasn't true.

Interviewer: I heard that *[inaudible]* **[0:14:19]** people that it seems that there was much more cooperation and help among people in those days than there is now.

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, yes, everybody was friendlier. Today everybody thinks they're trying to connive a dollar out of you with some kind of fancy insurance policy or trying to connive some way of getting your money that they don't have to earn or work for you know. But in those days, everybody was equal. And if you had money, you never let the poor person know it by hurting their feelings like they do today.

**[0:15:00]**

You know I know a young man that had money, we'd go to a dance and we were 17 or 18 and they have a tuxedo. I would save for a month before a dance came up to buy, to rent one for \$2.50. And I'd walk all the way down to 4th in Garrison Street to get it and walk all the way home with it. And the dance would be Saturday night. And if I didn't have it back in their before 9:30 on Monday morning, I was charged another day. And \$2.50 was a week, two weeks work almost, do you see what I mea? But it was a big thing to borrow your cousin's pants and wear their sleepers to rent a tuxedo or wear something that didn't fit you and hide in the corner and say you wouldn't be – people wouldn't see the coat in fit right. But to me it was always embarrassing, but outside of that I still have survived and had fun. But you're at home at an early age, I mean hour at night. You totally come home 11, you were in the house. If not your dad was out looking for you or my eight brothers were sent, six brothers and sisters were out looking for me, you see what I mean? We were controlled that way because after 12 o'clock, you're up to no good what we were always told.

Interviewer: You keep saying that it was all in a way an exciting time to grow up?

Mr. Dorsey: Well, it was fun because if you got anything or did anything it was – it was something great. If you were – if it was your turn to go for a ride on a car or if a neighbor invites you to go with their son in their car, it was such a thrill. And their parents would buy ice cream or take you on a picnic. You felt as though you were special to go and because all your brothers didn't go or sisters, do you know what I mean? And when they would go, you'd wonder why you can't go? It was sad really because some people just seem to go anyhow till later through the depression, it seemed to me like the depression lasted a lifetime really.

Interviewer: Well when did *[inaudible]* **[0:17:30]**.

Mr. Dorsey: Yes, yes, it seemed to get worst. And then I don't know, a lady would paint her house out of desperation and two or three of us boys and my dad would go over and paint a house and he would get \$100 maybe or \$50 for painting it, three-storey building. And we would paint, paint red led on the roofs and we paint and paint and do it fairly and do it perfectly. And the same then, man we had maybe pork chops or another dozen cans of beans. We always ate foods that seemed to be – it would be big beans, hotdogs in that nature stake without a question.

Interviewer: Did you even *[inaudible]* **[0:18:19]** at all?

Mr. Dorsey: No. You had your – our backyard was about maybe 40 by 60 and you could grow anything in the garden, you'd have to have a hell of a big yard to grow something to raise nine kids anyhow, you know what I mean? If you did grow, your neighbor would help themselves, but in those days the only gardens that we ever saw was out in the country.

Interviewer: Did you ever – did have a radio in your house?

Mr. Dorsey: Yes, Radio Kent with a big loud speaker.

Interviewer: *[inaudible]* **[0:18:55]**?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh yeah, that dog sitting on that white dog with the black eye and the horns was beautiful at that with mahogany or something come up from nothing you know. And we would sit in front of that thing and listen to the shadow and all of those things you know. And it would squeak. And it seemed to me it was either majestic or at order *[inaudible]* **[0:19:19]** in those days, you know. Or Motorola come out with a metal when it was made out of metal instead of mahogany wood. But it seemed to me the more money you had, the bigger the radio you had or you know what I mean, or the fancier the speaker. And you had the thing you put in your ears and you have the crystal sets and you put in different crystals for the phonographs, a song you put it. And they would go around and you get to hear it playing old songs.

Interviewer: I haven't seen any pictures on that.

Mr. Dorsey: And you'd change needles on the record fliers and my God it was really something.

**[0:20:00]**



Interviewer: Do you remember what you'd listen to during that year?

Mr. Dorsey: Well it seemed to me they were – in those days – the men still wore hats a lot and winged collars. And they were kind of fancy dressers. It seemed to me like it was a crazy time of my life because I was just a kid, but they all dress real fancy. Insurance men used to wear silk shirts with white cuffs, white collars or dark blue or red or green shirts you know. They really dress fancy I'd tell you. Big ties you know like they're wearing today almost. It seems to me history repeats itself, really. It was really something.

Interviewer: Can you recall the radio problems of the '30s?

Mr. Dorsey: It was Shadow. Let me see, because we all kind of listened to it at once. Shadow was one program. Or it would be the news which we weren't interested in as children.

Interviewer: All right, a lot of people mentioned Amos n Andy.

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, Amos n Andy, gosh yeah that was every night 7:30, yeah we all heard Amos n Andy.

Interviewer: That was the time.

Mr. Dorsey: Right Amos n Andy. I remember the Shadow, gosh, I don't know what else was on there, unless it was mentioned I would remember.

Interviewer: Did you ever listen to the Merchant Receiver *[inaudible]* [0:21:38].

Mr. Dorsey: I'd listened to that, but it wasn't during that period.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Dorsey: Much later, that was much later. I remember he came out.

Interviewer: Well, listen I'm carrying it up till 1940.

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, I remember when he gave that...

Unidentified voice: Yeah, because we were married when he came out with that then.

Mr. Dorsey: Scare on the radio. My god, we were being bonded, oh my god, yeah.

Interviewer: Have you heard that one?

Mr. Dorsey: I sure heard it. Man, you didn't know what to do. It was so real just like you get a broadcast now over the radio and the station we have everything stops.

Unidentified voice: Yes, *[inaudible]* **[0:22:14]**.

Mr. Dorsey: Huh?

Unidentified voice: They told me they had three other more candies out there, if you want more opinions.

Mr. Dorsey: God yeah.

Interviewer: We didn't bring enough tape. I have to do one at a time.

Mr. Dorsey: The guys, it's really – it was really something. I seem to have enjoyed it. Well now I enjoyed it more than I did then because it's been a good teacher to me. Everything I do in my way of life, I'd consider people that don't have money, consider...

Interviewer: You mean during the depression?

Mr. Dorsey: Depression, yeah. I don't try to fool a person with money. It teaches you so many things in those days to guide your life today. And if it would happen again, it would be the greatest thing in this world. I hate to ever say it because I don't think the young man today could survive it because we're really not used to it.

We used to go to funerals at night, three of us, young fellows, we look at obituary.

Interviewer: Oh, that's something.

Mr. Dorsey: This sounds funny as hell, but it's the God's truth. We'd say, "Here's the posh wedding or funerals were the greatest in the world," because everybody was buried inside, I mean they were laid out in the house. And we go down and see Harry do seek her somebody, *[inaudible]* **[0:23:38]**. He died. We've never saw this man before in our life and we walk in and the posh people are so graceful. I mean you got to see him. They love everybody and the Italians. And you walk in and say – of course you don't ask what's your name as you would did, they wouldn't hear it, just you come to see Harry or Murphy or somebody. And we walk in and we would look at the guy and we say, "Oh, poor Harry I work down with Pusy

and Jones with him. Oh Bloominthaws, you named many of the plants in town. Harley and Jones."

And we looked at them and of course you keep moving and the lady would say, "You got out in the dining room now boys and get yourself something to eat." And we go out in the dining room and man they have all kinds of ham and cheese and bread and cigarettes you know, trays full of cigarettes. And we fill our pockets up with cigarettes real sneaky just like the – like a handful you know, little hand, look all around, right in our pocket. Roll the cheese up just like rolling a newspaper and put it in our pocket. We stayed as long as we could or had to, talking to people we didn't even know who they were.

[0:24:55]

We walk out, get to 4th and *[inaudible]* [0:24:57] what did you get? And then we would go over to our girlfriend's house or something, lay it all out and have a party, you know. They want to give you wine and all but we didn't drink when we were kids. Of course I didn't drink anything until I was about 27 years old. I just didn't drink. And they have beers and all you know, *[inaudible]* [0:25:16] even be drunk as hell you'd see. I mean when they were drunk everybody was real drunk and that we're in the beer garden, but your neighbors and all were, it would just be one guy in each block would be a real drunkard, you know.

And then we'd go to another funeral or a viewing and then we'd end up to YMCA. We'd go there and sit down and all the nice leather chair and better it wasn't at home and pick up cigarette stumps. And we'd go around and pick up all the cigarettes, waste baskets and all. And we'd go home, 18, 19 years old, 20, dump all the cigarettes, stuff out those papers and we had a machine that cost 39 cents and we roll our cigarettes, make cigarettes out. It would be 10 brands in one that's how we made the cigarettes. And cigarettes were eight cents a pack, two cigarettes for a penny or we wish you'd steal now my dad's pack, take one out and shake it so he wouldn't know it. But he would leave us pack of cigarettes with one or two sticking out a certain distance and he'd knew *[inaudible]* [0:26:30]. And we knew he'd do it so we'd arrange him because we knew he would never count them, things of that – it was something like fighting for survival of the little things.

But as far as drinking was concerned in our family, we never saw much of it. We all drink today, but a bottle would sit up in a kitchen cabinet, it was all be a bottle of vinegar. But my dad's friends would drink if they come around. They drink a high bar, man, I thought that was terrible. And he

had brothers that were real rummies, you know. It's really something. But my dad, he kept a good example for all of us when it comes to drinking or staying that light or our later running around with women and all, we just didn't do it.

Interviewer: Did you ever get to the movies?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh yeah. We would go down before the movies open and sweep up to get in. And you'd see two shows for a nickel or dime. And if you walk in fast in backwards, they thought you were coming out. That's the God's truth, really. And if you happen to know the ticket guy, they'd take the tickets, he'll let you in. We didn't see they turn their head in those days. You always hung around on a movie, picking up the peanuts to see if there were any peanuts in the shell you know. And you're not really poor, but the things all the kids did. And the kids were hanging around till the movies closed that the parents didn't care. But my family we were all home at night and everything was settled down like an old farm. And we live in the city all our life.

Interviewer: What did you see at the movies?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, the Eddie Cantor. It would be Tom Nicks, Stella Taylor, Judd Barrymore, Charlie Chaplin, crazy things, you know, silent movies and a piano player down at the end of the stage, he played the piano if anything was exciting and he'd get excited too. And it was all – of course you'd see the action and the movies went hell in those days. You know, the trains they'd go like a thousand miles a minute. And the girl laying on the truck, you know, that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: So did you see the first *[inaudible]* [0:29:04].

Mr. Dorsey: Yes, the first talkie, Al Jolson, I guess, yeah, I sure did because when I was a kid, everything was put up there right in front of you. It's flashing off and on, you know, happy to look at all those kinds of stuff.

Interviewer: Did you go in the '30s to the movies?

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you remember those?

Mr. Dorsey: No, I can't picture.

Interviewer: Did you remember the *[inaudible]* [0:29:34]?

Mr. Dorsey:

I remember the *[inaudible]* **[0:29:36]** yeah. And then the movies starting to get fancier. And we only had two movies in town. I think it was the old opera house which was great for stage plays years ago, you know where everything was on the stage. And then it turned into silent movies and then finally it came around to talkies.

**[0:30:00]**

And the old queen theatre was one and then the arcadia was down at fifth – I think fifth of the market. But you walked, you would walk to the movies and you walk home. I'll never forget one day I was about – it was prior to the depression, but during that period, it was starting to slow down. One Sunday my mother took me up stairs, I must have been maybe 10 years old and he put me on a bathroom and scrubbed the hell out of me. He put me on a bath tub and we didn't have hot water like you have today. You have a bucket of day stove here with cold and made a 30 galloon tank full of water. And after one bath, you have to go down and keep the drivers on to keep it hot. And she would scrub, man he would pull your ears out like they were six foot long. She got me all dressed up and I got in the car with my dad and her and we went down on market street and I had brother shoes, brother stockings, everything to make me look like a big shot.

My day out with my father and mother in a Saturday, but there was always older child old enough to look at the rest. We look after one another see. We went down to some store, I think it was Eppy's I remember and I went in and this very big Jewish guy was standing there with a ball head, with a tape over his shoulder. And they said something to him, of course, me I just *[inaudible]* **[0:31:39]** and he put on the hat to something. And I got out in the car, still crying. And my dad was saying, "Shut up." And he got me all dressed up. When I get out of the car, I was still crying, I was scared to death. I thought – I was thinking, "God they're going to sell me." I really thought so because there were so damn many of us and I had the fear that he was going to sell me, get me shined up to give away or sell me, nice boy. I never get as long as I leave, but he and me across the back seat and slapped me in the mouth. And he start driving. And when he drove right out home, with the minute I got in the house, I was safe again. And then I showed the other kids what I had, see what I mean?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Mr. Dorsey: My mother go shopping and she had to bring something home for all the nine children, no partiality shown, equal.

Interviewer: But this time is the hard time where you got to bring that at home?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, yes, oh yeah, oh yeah, she'd do it. And my dad would give her money to buy her dress and he'd go out get yourself a dress, maybe hit a **[inaudible] [0:32:51]** got an extra \$20 or something. And my mother was a beautiful woman. She like to spend money, but she know how to handle money when the chips were down. But he got her – she came home in a shopping trip, every child got something, everyone. But the main one that she went out to buy for was all right then as long as we got something because we didn't know what values were, except Bobby, Richard Jack, Franie, Richard, Marcella got something new because I knew next Sunday I'd be wearing the suit if it fit, see what I mean? It strays to go to school with your brother's shoes on with slide up down like that in your feet, do you know what I mean and pull your stockings down like this so they wouldn't see the hole. Because my mother couldn't iron 12 pairs of socks a day everyday of her life. She would wash those stockings whether they have holes in them or not and she was always had a thing look like these things they have at **[inaudible] [0:34:00]**, they shake some of these stockings all the time, all wearing shirts all the time. But on a Saturday night no matter how poor we were, she and my dad would get down to the hotel DuPont Grill room with another couple just like they were the – she call him the duke of winter. And hell he was – my mother was seven years older many years later. He'd tell her she had the best looking lets that any – best looking legs any gal in the gallery. So that's humor that gone them through all of this. And it was great. They live to be 80 years old.

Interviewer: Your wife, you were married during the '30s?

Mr. Dorsey: No, we were married 1940. I was 25, she was 21. We've been married going on – we're married 31 years.

**[0:35:00]**

I've been doing plumbing 43 years. And I've been in my own business 28 years. Plumbing, my god, I grew up on it, that's all I know. And I have six brothers, same way.

Interviewer: Even though when **[inaudible] [0:35:21]**.

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, oh yeah, they all learned a good trade and that's why they can't educate you but I gave you a good trade. And that's what we did, but we were trading in those days, you'd just become a plumber, you learn how to take up floors, you learn to plaster, you knew how to drive a nail. You could take a hard wood floor and put it back you wouldn't know it was taken up. We learned all the crafts. But today, you learn one thing and you can be half ass of that, but you're a pro and get big money for it. And to me, I wouldn't *[inaudible]* *[0:35:57]* worth 10 cents when it comes to a mechanic because they're specialized in the day and one thing, you hang one door, you do it all your life hang a door, hang a door everyday. You put the hinges on. You saw the door, spacious, that's what's coming to, to make everything perfect and put it on a some kind of assembly line. When we were raised, we didn't call in all the other crafts to put a bathroom and we did it all. We could build a house, a garage. My wife went a door over there. I have a door through the long half hour, what do you think about? The friends of mine, today would have to get an architect to see if the structure would hold it up, that the studs are long enough and weaken the main support, is that a burden partition, well we already know that. we knew that when we were 18 years old.

But today you can take advantage of people that doesn't know because they all were educated in one field and make a serious problem out of it, make a \$50 job into 2,000. And they are the smart ones, do you know what I mean? But they're not – all right, we won't be long enough. No. They're not in a hurry.

Interviewer: Do you remember Franklin Roosevelt?

Mr. Dorsey: Very well. I love him because he – I remember printing companies, they call them sweat shops and they're working with 12 or 18 cents an hour, hot machines, no air condition, nothing, hot lights and these things that punch out those led plates you that make the print. I did the plumbing in them. I worked in them on the heating systems and all. And they work like slaves for nothing. And I remember when NRA first come out. Man I think it was 32 cents an hour or something. Everybody got 32 cents an hour. Man the world come awake. And of course we had all these falls – I forgot the name of what they call it, but they were like chain gangs, all down to the brainy wine and on the railroads.

Interviewer: Plus CCC?

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, CCC is something else in town.

Interviewer: WPA.

Mr. Dorsey: WPA. And I don't get on one of those, but there were thousands of people on them, brilliant, educated people. But that frightened me. You'd go get a job somewhere. There was a line from here to down to Marsh Road. And the minute you get up there, the late you'd be there for 5 o'clock in the morning. Get up there, it's your turn, the next day, shut the window down. And upholster he was doing insulating work, sold the installation on the pipe cover. A plumber, he did pipe fitting, plumbing anything like treasure, he could do pipe work. But I know I stood many a line like that to get a job when things weren't laid. And things seemed to get worst. I think they get worst before they get better, I'd tell you.

Interviewer: Do you remember when Roosevelt was first elected?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Were there a sudden psychological change as he go kind of *[inaudible]* **[0:39:35]**?

Mr. Dorsey: Well it seemed to me when he got elected as when I got my first job outside of my dad. And I have never lost the day's work since. And then I remember, prior to that Hoover was in. And things were – and prior to that, it was a little stale. There was an uplift somewhere when I was a child, things were good, 1917 maybe 1924, thing were great.

**[0:40:09]**

And Hoover came in and all country went flat but remain the crash and everything. Now Roosevelt came in like a guardian angel, this country started to perk up. People started buying cars and they got better and better and better. Wages starting to get higher and higher and higher then dad started buying a car. I could see, man he had a truck, I have to drive around a truck instead of a bicycle and it get better and better and better. And it kept getting better all the time.

Interviewer: Could it just have been like Hoover was in the wrong time and Roosevelt came in the right time when things would have gotten better?

Mr. Dorsey: I don't know. Being a child, see I wouldn't know. But we were grateful for anything. And things boomed, boomed and boomed and boomed and boomed. And it seems to me years and years later there was a war. Of course it seemed to me like 15, 25 years before we had any war, a Second World War and then things got serious again. And then it was like



better war ever since. And then of course Roosevelt lost that then things start to lay off again. I couldn't understand it.

Interviewer: After he died?

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, after he died. And that just seemed like we're heading for another depression again and nobody knows how to really stop it. It's a slow moving thing this time. It's not moving very fast. It's going to – I'd give it a couple more years, three more years, I'd feel as ever going to be some kind of a buying somewhere because I see it in business.

Interviewer: Well do you think that if they are going to be a depression, when it comes, how do you think the young people, you mention of the war, but how do you think the young would do in it compared to what the young people did before?

Mr. Dorsey: I don't know. I would hesitate to guess on that because they don't know what it is. I'm pretty sure 90 percent of them don't realize what it is to glap and work steadily. I mean not this one day of sweat and hard work. Not just a month but a year or two, they never had it to really earn a dollar to eat, to survive, see what I mean? They've never been through that. And you can't blame them because it's the parents fault. And God knows the parents don't want to go through it anyhow. But how the hell can this world continue to go on to keep their nice little junior and little missy in a garden, see what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Dorsey: I don't think you can continue. I think it's all against us.

Interviewer: It seems like...

Mr. Dorsey: It's going to be an awakening of some kind for them. And it's going to be – I think it's going to be terrible. I really do.

Interviewer: What I've heard is that the people who were brought up in the depression knew wants, felt the need of things then began to gather up got more material as things got better and requested for security and everything. And then their children were born into this thing. And now it's up to the children. Now it's in their hands.

Mr. Dorsey: Well they better hurry up and learn a little more because I think the government is going to break down along with it. See what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Dorsey: I don't think our government or our social security, I don't think I'll live long enough. I think social security be dropped before I'm able to, the next 15 years to have it, 10 years, see what I mean? I think there'll be something going on that on that we'll live collect social security. If I do live I will never get it. I'll put it that way. And I have been planning it since when it first came out, I don't know 1927, 1932 or something. I remember when it started. And I've never drawn – I've never been unemployed in my life because I was never afraid to work and I never took advantage of subsistence or hike and live without working, but it seems to me, the people today are the younger people. I think the thing is that every little thing the government has to offer and I think they're breaking the government without them knowing it, really. I don't know what's going on.

But the strangest thing I think in the next few years, I have worked hard and have done everything to be successful and I end up right where I started with nothing, really. What I have, we'll have to share it, see what I mean?

**[0:44:57]**

So we'll be right back where we started again, but we're going to have a bunch of people unorganized that don't know where to turn. And I think the communist are going to take over this country, the way I believe, I really think it.

Interviewer: *[inaudible] [0:45:13].*

Mr. Dorsey: I think we're hit now by particularly. The hit is somehow infiltrated in some way. I don't know. You don't see that, that love that day, that respect children for the parents, their parents for the children as we did when we were kids.

Interviewer: That's what I meant by the material, are you saying that sort of might come in between.

Mr. Dorsey: Yeah, there's something missing. There's something that's very sacred, that's important, that's missing. You'll see young man today strike his father. Oh my god, you wouldn't raise your hand to your dad when I was child. I wouldn't raise my hand to my dad now. Fear, you were taught fear or respect I guess you were taught to tolerate other people. Don't look at a cripple child like he was a freak or make funny. We were taught

to respect one another and it's God's way of doing things. But today, my God, it's like – I was sitting in my office last week. A week prior to that, I'd cut a finger off see, I cut it off and thank God it did take, it was hanging by a thread. And he sewed it back on, a surgeon did with no hope for it but it's all right, it took.

The last Friday, I was at Gwen a week ago, Friday a week, I was at Gwen to have it checked to see what it looked like. And he was going to tell me whether I was going to keep it or not. When I was sitting in my office, a 20 year old apprentice boy of mine as I've had for three years, very quiet, very nice young man, I'd asked him about a job he worked on the day before and he got right abusive about it, real mad. And I told him to keep his mouth shut, the apprentice boy, "Now you keep your mouth shut." He walked 15 feet around to my double office and I was sitting in my chair, a double chair at my desk and he attacked me. He's 200 pounds, 20 years old. He broke my nose. I got five stitches across here, my nose dropped down and I got sick four stitches under my eye. I have a bruised back which I haven't slept for a week. And he went at me like a tiger. And then ran around screaming up and down in the office. "I'd kill you if I see you on the street," for no reason. And I had a warrant signed out for his arrest and we're going to take it to court in a month whenever it comes up.

But there was a boy and he was quiet, talked very little, just smiled very little, well liked by everybody that went crazy and beat me up in my office. And I got something wrong in my chest, I can't hardly bring my neck upright. That's been over a week ago you see and I haven't gotten over it yet.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Dorsey: And that was a young boy, 20 years old, I'm teaching him a trade. And he's been with me close to three years and nobody knows what happened. It took two men, 200 pounds each to hold him. And he kept attacking me. And I couldn't hit him because of his finger and he knocked my chair off right on the floor. I thought a truck hit me. So there are the things we're running up against today. And I wasn't even looking at him even when he hit me, see? So what a thing. Of course, this happened I guess years ago too, probably more so. But today, I don't know. The kid went to high school, he's a high school graduate, from a nice family, why did they attack people and do these things? Insecurity or does he have an emotional background, I don't know, about *[inaudible]* **[0:49:07]** do you know what I mean? It's a serious thing. The boy is afraid of something or something's wrong some place, fear of work or whether he'll finish he's trade or something, but we always had a nice communication among all

the men in my staff. And people were amazed. He beat me to a pop. You should have seen my face out like that. And he knew I had a finger cut off and my glasses were on. So you don't know today. I'll never lose faith to young men or young girls, or the young people today because they got a lot to offer, but I hope half of this country takes care of them and keeps them so they can survive in the way they've been taught.

[0:49:58]

Interviewer: Do you think that the depression has taught the country a lesson?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh I know it's taught men like my age a lesson. I know it taught everyone of them. It taught, I don't know, it teaches us that we fear nothing. I fear nothing being out of work. And if they came up tomorrow and told me I was Uncle Sam come in and says, "You are broke, you are flat, we'll take everything you have got," I wouldn't mind that a bit because I could survive. I know how to survive under conditions like that. But you take a man with the same things that I have that was raised 25 years after I was raised, he would blow his brains out, you know what I mean, higher education, get a Ph.D. or a masters degree and he's making 30, \$40,000 a year and you're telling him, you're broke and you're out of the job and worth taking your home for this and taking your car for that. That man could not stand it because he's been put on a pedestal with his degrees. See what I mean? He really thinks he's important. I don't think I'm important.

Interviewer: You don't?

Mr. Dorsey: No I don't. They tell me I should be with the success I've had in my business through hard work and all.

Interviewer: What do you mean by important?

Mr. Dorsey: I'm not proud at what I've accomplished. It's just a normal way of honest everyday way of life to work, be honest and make a living. Use your head the best you know how for seven years of school. God gave you certain things, personality. He gives you certain amount of looks. He gives you a certain amount of character. I don't know where you get all these things that are born, given to you for free but you must use them. Don't waste them. But if you waste them and let them go in a no care attitude, you'll gain nothing. You can have the biggest brain in the world. But if you can't – if you don't know how to shake hands and approach people and talk to people, you're wasting, to me, dollars on education. See what I mean?

I have a young man shaking my hand, he puts his hand in mine like a dead fish. And you came in and you shook my hand like a man. You're sincere you see. But if you take a kid to put his hand you're like, "Seriously, what the hell kind of a fish is that?" And it's really something in their make up and it has a lot to do with their success in life. And you could call it bullshit, anything you want, but it helps their survival when the pins are down. That's the God's truth. I see it everyday in the week. I look at young man at 6.4, handsome looking guys, built like Tarzan, my God, everything, education and all. And when it comes to being a salesman or putting something over, the job they're doing, they'll never make it. They're better off getting behind the jackass with a plow because they got the beef and the strength to do it. You know what I mean.

And you'd take another guy, he's about 5 foot 6, weights about 120 pounds soak in wet, he's got more personality then go get in his life with half the education. And there's a guy that's going to make, yeah, see what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah. One more question about, if we go back a little bit, did you ever hear in the radio Roosevelt's fire side chats?

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, I listen to them. Well, it seemed to me there weren't few that would be with Prime Minister Churchill or Coach *[inaudible]* **[0:53:59]** or somebody. You'd see him all sitting around on television.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know. I mean in a – when he would come out.

Mr. Dorsey: Well, you'd hear him on the radio that was all. If you were not educated not to realize what he's talking about or same as you've been talking about Mickey Mouse because I don't know what they meant.

Interviewer: When you look back on the depression now, who's *[inaudible]* **[0:54:25]**. When you look back, how do you see that time? Some people see this kind of struggle, really bad times maybe.

Mr. Dorsey: It was a struggle for survival for everybody really. It really was. My wife was born down state where they had farms and all. They didn't what it meant to not have food. They were raised...

Unidentified voice: Well we had a garden. When they *[inaudible]* **[0:54:54]**.

**[0:54:57]**

Mr. Dorsey: Well you had chickens, see we didn't have that.

Unidentified voice: We had chickens. We make bread as well.

Mr. Dorsey: We were at the city.

Unidentified voice: We have clothes. We didn't buy anything.

Mr. Dorsey: Every Sunday half the city people are out in the farms to see their relative. They got real friendly.

Unidentified voice: Yeah, they died down *[inaudible]* **[0:55:12]**.

Mr. Dorsey: They thought they were above the farmer to depression, then they were down there every Sunday get dumplings and chicken if you had the gasoline to drive down there or the car that would survive on 60 or 70 miles and back. Of course when I was a kid, a farmer was only five miles out of Wilmington. See, this was a farm here. If you walk 20 minutes out, you wouldn't be in a farm. The farmer would chase the hell out of you with a big dog. Today you could walk for miles, you're still in the city, see what I mean? Sure. But today there are no farmers around *[inaudible]* **[0:55:48]** to eat or to eat. They know they get food. It got to come in, in the refrigerator truck something of that nature.

Sure we were kids. It was a struggle and its better struggle too, I'd tell you.

Interviewer: But you all thought – you'd see it's a struggle but also it seems like a good time when you grew up?

Mr. Dorsey: Well it wasn't a good time.

Unidentified voice: You're thankful.

Mr. Dorsey: You're thankful of what you have.

Unidentified voice: It made you realize the value, but it also made – I think people love more closer, much closer.

Mr. Dorsey: Oh, yeah. What you get today, you appreciate no matter what it is.

Unidentified voice: *[inaudible]* **[0:56:30]** I mean things like cars and houses.

Mr. Dorsey: Clothes didn't mean anything.

Unidentified voice: Then you move in together, you've got cousins growing up but...

**[0:56:44] End of Audio**