

Interview with Mr. Hawk featuring Emily

Total runtime: 2:10:22

PART 1

[[00:00:00]] - MR HAWK: These houses that were being built right after the war -- A-- again this is that political stupid thing in me but when the housing market collapsed which was like a couple years later... they had to find a way to regenerate it.

EMILY: Mmm-hmm.

MR HAWK: And what's the best way to make something happen? Exactly what they did in Black Bottom. They forced people to move and they forced other people to move. And that's when the suburbs were all sproutin' up. North of 8 Mile was off-arms. In fact at Carbelay there was a farm right next door. I have pictures of corn. (*Store bell rings*) And like archives I've mentioned d--d--dumpin in the dipster, you know.

EMILY: Wow, wow.

MR HAWK: So, that-- that's that political thing, but again i--it--it's *my* spin on it.

EMILY: Yeah, well, and I--I mean it's what happened.

MR HAWK: Yes, well I have some more spinnin' too here. Um... this is where the Tom Sawyer stuff came in, you know. Will all that... let's see if there's anymore before we move on... Make sure I got 'em all. Oh, this is uh, Rusa Park. Uh, it's spelled wrong here but don't worry about that. This is on State Fair. That's-- these are the houses that are built here.

EMILY: Wow.

MR HAWK: There's a dirt road. These are some of my... childhood friends.

EMILY: Wow.

MR HAWK: From that time. That's um, from the World Trade Center by the way. That's down at Cobo Hall. This is a C ration card. 'Member I was tellin' you about the B's and A, B, and C?

EMILY: Mmm-hmm.

MH: This is a C -- happens just to be a C just so you know what to click.

E: Huh.

MH: There's a little explanation about things.

E: Wow.

MH: Okay now, here... This is here a while.

E: Yep.

MH: Now, this line of darkness here that's a railroad track.

E: Okay.

MH: Okay. And that used to go straight up to Gratiot -- now when you got near Gratiot you had Pfeiffer's Brewery, big brewery, and on... Atwater you had Gobal's Brewery. Then on Gratiot you had Stroh's Brewery, and uh, so you had all this Stroh's, Gobal's -- all those breweries around there. And you can see this is Jefferson right here, right in front of this building, this is Jefferson right here, okay? Now you come over here this is exactly Mount Elliott, okay?

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And all the streets that were in between there. And then you come over here and see all these trees that's like -- you get over Lafayette where the cemetery is. So that's kind of a neat picture...

E: That is cool.

MH: ...that I pulled in today. This is the um, I used -- I call this Detroit Jewel and here it's called a Garland um... uh... stove. But I believe when I've -- from what I remember the one that was originally there and Detroit Jewel it was part of Garland later on, or whenever. They had said Detroit Jewel on it. This wound up at State Fair. It was moved there and then it caught on fire. This is -- was at Belle Isle Bridge.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: East Grand Boulevard and uh, Jefferson.

[[00:03:00]] - E: Wow.

MH: Uh... so let's go on here. Let's get some... So they're pictures of um, Dresden and I have no pictures of um, Lafayette. So, I told you the story about the war -- Korean War breaking out and after that we wound up moving to where the-- the kitchen was. On Lafayette and Elmwood. We went from Tom Sawyer world, you know, down there. And one of the first things that happened is I had a dog -- this isn't important to the story but it happened -- and we're movin' and the dog ran out on Lafayette and got run over by a car. My dog.

E: Aww...

MH: And I was just... nine years old. So nothin' to do, nothin' to do, we're -- my sister and I are trapped and we had a lil' sister too. Uh, she was an infant, you know. And we're trapped on the second floor of this -- above the catering company and there's nothin' to do, so my dad says 'well you wanna go down and learn how to swim? Go down there to Elmwood recreation?' Three blocks south of Lafayette was Elmwood recreation. There was a swimming pool there. And right across the street was a fire station. So I went down there and uh, took a suit with me and changed in the little room and again it was -- I was the only snowflake there and I was havin' a ball kinda walkin' around the water, practicing my dog paddle thing -- trying to anyways. So when I was done they were gettin' ready to send everybody home. It was gettin' in the evening.

So I went in and start changing and three boys were in there -- three black boys. And they decided to have some fun with me. So they started hitting me in the rear with towels. And I-- I did the uh, unforgivable thing -- 'course I didn't know any better. I dropped a dime which is a modern expression, you know, you're squealin' on somebody. I told the guy who was in charge of the pool and he scolded them. And they were all about my size, about the same age. So when I left, I got about a block away and they-- they got me. Had powled me and most of the damage done to me was mental. It wasn't hate, it was just I got beat up. But I wasn't physically hurt bad. And of course I went home cryin'. And I walked in -- I told you my dad was pretty tough -- and uh, walked in. (*Imitates father*) 'What happened?' I told him, he said 'I... You're gonna learn how to fight now!' His words. So, I'm like you know, okay. You know, I hate this, you know. So, the next day I'm out playin' and there's a kid next door and the whole family actually was pretty neat. They had a lot of kids and this big guy was about my age but he was tall. (*Imitates boy*) 'Hey what are you doin', man? What you up to, you know?' And he was talkin' to me and I was sayin' 'Yeah cool,' and told him what happened.

[[00:06:00]] - MH: He was like 'Well, don't worry about that. I'll teach you how to fight.' And I'm thinking yeah alright! So he says, 'Here's what you do...' He says, 'You go to your opponent and you start talkin' to 'em. Say hey man, you know, we don't gotta fight. You know, everything's cool, you know. You know I - you know I like you, you like me.' And says, 'When you see his attention driftin' hit 'em right between the eyes.'

(*E laughs*)

MH: It's called a sucker punch. (*Laughs*) Well, with that I'm the king of the world now. I know how to fight now all of a sudden. So, that thing about sucker punch, yeah, it's always - it's worked out through the years I've been -- instances where things have happened, you have to catch a guy off-guard. 'Cause either you're gonna win or he's gonna win. So, who do wanna win? So, I learned that right on the spot. So, then I started playin' with this kid and then the other kid down the street -- the Italian kid, you know. And uh, we had our little crew, and we'd go over to the graveyard and play in the water by the pond and catch frogs and different things. And had a lotta fun, you know. Just all clean fun, no turnin' over gravestones or nothin' like that?

HAWK'S SON: Have you been through Elmwood?

E: Yeah, yeah, I love it. It's so beautiful.

MH: So, in the Winter -- in the Winter we'd get -- 'cause Elmwood was a hill -- and we'd go up about two blocks and we'd get uh, anything that would slide. A sledge, anything we got our hands on. And would slide down. And the trick was to stop before we got to Lafayette because Lafayette was a real busy street. So, that was great fun, you know. And thrilling. And the other thing I remember 'bout uh, that particular thing about the house and where we lived... There was a bar across the street and it was on ground level, and we were on the second floor. And my sister Bev and I-- In summer, of course, my parents on weekends they would go to their bar things with their friends and play euchre or whatever. And we were there alone. And so, Bev and I, instead of watchin' Jackie Gleason... (*laughs*) we would watch the bar 'cause it was a better movie.

(*Laughter and mic shake*)

MH: It would always start -- just when it started to get dark they'd start pourin' in -- the customers. And dressed to the nines -- it's Friday, you know they all got paychecks like you'd expect. And then the music would start playin' and I have some of the tapes of the music. It was a lot of harmonica stuff. Blues from the lowlands. And we loved it. And it was like a parade, in and out. It was like heart beating. I mean it was, it was very romantic and we're watching--

HAWK'S SON: So you're talkin' about Black... people, or...?

MH: Yeah.

HS: Oh.

MH: Well, Black Bottom.

HS: So--

MH: Black Bottom.

HS: So, it's completely homogenous, it's no--

MH: It was all Black, all Black people. You know... So, we would watch the ins and outs, the fights spill in the street. Uh, actually saw a woman razor a guy one time. And that was like uh, probably he cheated on her, or something. And her-- her razor cutting -- again, urban legend is kinda like a mark, a tattoo.

[[00:09:00]] - MH: Mark you, you know. (*Imitatively*) 'That's my man, don't you mess.' You know. (*Chuckles*) So, that was always a thing on Friday and Saturday night. And then Sunday was church day. And dressed beautifully -- beautiful hats, mostly women and mostly old women, walking to church. I never forget.

E: Wow.

MH: It was like all the beautiful colors, you know. Powder blues and pinks, and-and I mean dressed... Well, during the week, you know again, it's back to, you know, the old system. In the summertime, we were around the house and playing, you know, not too far away. 'Couple blocks maybe go to Belle Isle like I said. But I remember that kid next door - I can't remember his name -- but he said, 'Yeah, my momma's gettin' ready to get some chicken goin' there.' I said, 'Chicken? What -- ? you know--' (*Imitates boy*) 'Yeah, she's 'gon whack it's head off!' (*Laughs*) And I went up to the second floor and I was lookin' 'cause there was like a porch there and I was watchin' from up above. Sure enough, here she come with this chicken. Whacks the head off and the chicken's runnin' around the yard with no head. And I'm like whoa I never saw nothin' like this before. And of course she plucks it and everything. That-- that was probably for Sunday dinner 'cause you didn't eat chicken during the week. That was special. But that was quite a sight. And of course people had chickens and the chickens had eggs, and nobody bothered -- the city didn't have any, you know, say about it back then. And there was gardens. A lotta people had gardens. We'd go down the alleys and there'd be tomatoes growin' and this and that. And then the one alley right around the corner from our house was the guy that had the Sheeny wagon. And we used to go over there and pet his horse. You know, (*imitatively*) 'Can we pet your horse?' You know, it'd be in the evening when he was pushin' him in the barn. You know, a little barn. And uh, there was a guy next to us who was uh, he--he salvaged stuff

and he had a pile -- I never forget, it was about this high -- all blue glass. Broken bottles. And then he'd just keep added to it. Then when the pile got so big then he would shovel it into the truck and take it down in reclaim.

E: Wow.

MH: So, interesting thing. And then the buses up and down Lafayette. In the wintertime, we'd get behind the buses and slide like you know, when the cars... And in the summer, we had those real cheap old roller skates we used to crank. And we'd get in the back of the bus and go all the way Downtown and back. And they never catch us or nothin'. Just, uh, havin' a ball. 'Course we're roller skating. (*Chuckles*) You know, between the trip. And then uh, behind us is an alley. And then right behind the catering company was an alley. And then, there was a guy that had a uh, drycleaning business. And the thing -- the sounds and the smells is the whole other picture here. And that part of the neighborhood. And the laundry's where there were the dry cleaner's was chemicals. And you had to smell. It was always warfing. And so, he hired me for a quarter to come in every couple days and sweep the place up. And I just loved the 25 cents, it was a million dollars. And he got -- he'd be really friendly with me and he was a World War II veteran and he was stationed in France after the war.

[[00:12:00]] - MH: And he came over here when he was released from his, his uh, military duties and opened up the little... store that he had there, you know. And he did tailor work and he would do, you know, the ironing and the dry cleaning. And he called me a -- I believe it was Shook, Snook, or Shook, and it meant friend, I think. I can't remember now.

E: He was -- what? W-- where was he from?

MH: He was, he was, he was from somewhere in the United States.

E: Oh, okay.

MH: He wasn't French. He was a soldier -- he was Black.

E: Yeah.

MH: You know. And there were -- there were a lot of Black soldiers in World War II. And uh, you know, that's another thing I politically get mad about 'cause people, you know- (*imitatively*) 'Well, you know, what you do for your country?' Well, they did everything for their country. And he uh, he was very nice to me. He always treated me real good. And he was never mean. And he'd always give me a quarter. And it was like, you know, a big thrill. And remember that specifically and then... couple doors down was um, where uh, Faranti lived -- the Italian family that came back to me. And their father... built uh, crates for the farmers at Eastern Market and he did it right there in his house. Little garage saws. And he used to c-- cut them little slats of wood and then nail 'em all together. And there'd be like fruit boxes and then he'd take all that down, you know, in the truck, you know, he had a little flatbed truck that he drove down there like a model A. And then he'd unload and sell them to the farmers. You know, a penny, or nickel, whatever. And that was how they made their living.

E: Wow.

MH: And he was uh, he was pretty cool. And uh, we'd go down and watch him nailing, and so we're watching, and sawing, you know. *(Bell rings)* This is what he did every single day. So, the other thing about that area was the fire station. And they had on -- it-- it was a ladder company, I guess they call them now, or something. It had the -- they had the hook and ladder where the guy drove the -- the -- the trailer. *(Laughs)* Well, we hear the fire engine comin' and my sister and I'd run right straight to the windows in the summertime. You know, the windows would be open. And the fire truck'll come around the corner and on two wheels. I mean, there's a guy on the back and he's goin' like this to make that turn -- it was a pretty sharp turn. And that was always exciting to watch that -- that truck. And sometimes stuff would come off the fire truck. You know, like a nozzle would be laying there. 'Cause it'd hit a bump, so we'd retrieve it and take it down there, walk it down there like big heroes, you know. *(Laughs)*

E: *(Laughs)* Oh, man.

MH: So--

E: Can I show you on a map, or could we look at a map and--?

MH: Yeah, go 'head.

E: You can point out where--

MH: Yeah.

E: --Where you lived? 'Cause I'm trying-- I'm like-- I'm thinking it'd be really interesting to be able to see... *(Microphone fumbles)* It'd just take me one second to pull it up here.

MH: Gimme time to read my notes and try to refresh some of that stuff I was tryin' to remember. *(Chuckles)*

E: So many stories, it's amazing.

HS: You got notes?

MH: I told you about the car- -

E: It's so great.

MH: Cars with no tires. See, that-- we're gonna re-- We should record that.

E: Yeah.

(Paper shuffles)

E: Yeah, and I also-- I--I want to rewind and just have you say who you are, what your family's name, you know. Just so that we have all that too on--on tape.

[[00:15:00]] - E: Um, here let me just pull this up real quick.

(Background noise)

MH: By talking about uh, that neighborhood I've actually jumped to stage 2 of my story. 'Cause I-- I should've went to the industrial first but that's okay.

E: Yeah, that's okay. And we can kinda like reset and just, you know, start from wherever you want to start. Okay, let me just pull this up.

MH: Yeah, I'm kinda going backwards. I went to Dresden then-- *(Chuckles)*

E: That's okay. Okay, let me go down here...

(Phone makes sound)

E: This is a big map.

HS: Didn't you say that guy taught you about somethin'?

MH: Which guy?

HS: Guy that was runnin' the laundromat?

MH: Well, I learned a lot about, you know, laundry and dry cleaning. *(Chuckles)* You know. 'Cause he was pressin' clothes, ironing. And everybody had their stuff hanging in there, you know. All-

HS: You got insight into...

MH: I don't know.

HS: His... I think--I think it was saying you learned somethin' from him, or somethin'.

MH: Well, everything--everything I touched on there I learned. You know, I--I've never seen a-- You know, an ironing press. You know, the ones that used to close like that. He had them in there. And he had -- his heat was by coal. He used to heat up -- in the winter he had a coal burning stove and he'd throw coal in it. So he had-- like I said, he had the smells of the coal burnin' and -- well, there's more that I could say when I get done with the map here.

E: Okay.

(Shuffling noises)

E: Kinda slow.

MH: Okay.

E: So, here's on the cemetery. There's McDougal.

MH: Okay, we gotta go over here. Elmwood and Lafayette. Where's Lafayette? This one.

E: It's just down, just a bit.

MH: It's comin' up.

E: It's just loading.

MH: M'kay. Once we get Lafayette then I can show exactly where the house , or not the house, but the-the uh, store's where they were together the two stores. And the flats were upstairs.

E: Where'd you go to school?

MH: Uh, I'll get to that horrible story.

E: Wow.

(MH clears throat)

E: Okay, here's Lafayette.

(Background noise)

E: So, I'll zoom in for you so you can see it.

MH: Okay, bring that up. The one that's got some color to it there. Is that Lafayette?

E: Yep.

MH: That would be the building, right there. And then-

E: Right on the corner?

MH: Mmm-hmm.

E: It's going, it's just slow. I'm just trying to zoom in.

MH: Yeah, that was uh, two stores and they fronted on Lafayette... okay?

[[00:18:00]] - MH: And they had the windows opened, so you can look at the stores.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And the apartments were upstairs.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And there were two separate apartments. The one by the cemetery was the owner of the building's apartment. He was Italian. Him and his wife were both very Italian -- broken English. And uh, back then they used the expression, you know, for a lot of people that came outta the war torn era, they call 'em DPs.

E & MH: Displaced Persons.

MH: And they also used the uh, the terms Hunkies, which were Hungarians. You know, and then the-the the thing for the Polacks -- they had it all. And a lot of those people came here after the War 'cause they were needed.

E: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

MH: And they had to get away from, you know, persecution. Uh, what do you wanna know here?

E: So that's, so you lived on the corner there--

MH: Yeah.

E: On the Northside of--

MH: We lived on the Westside of the building.

E: Okay.

MH: And there was only a West a-- and, uh, East on this building. Of course it had a North and South but it was just the front and back of the building. Back of the building was that way, the front of the building was right on Lafayette. When you come around the corner here, you come down to about here -- that's the fire station. And it doesn't show it here. Down further--

E: Across-- across Elmwood.

MH: Yes, on the--

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: It's on the Eastside of Elmwood. And then next -- on the next block over would be Elmwood Recreation.

E: Yep.

MH: It's got a big playfield on it. And of course right now this is Martin Luther King. Now down here on Lafayette, along the graveyard, they had a couple places where the fence went in and there were a house or two down there on the graveyard site--

E: Oh, really.

MH: Yeah. But uh, of course it doesn't show it.

E: Interesting.

MH: And uh--

E: So, do you remember the name of the bar across the street?

MH: No.

E: No.

MH: No, it's...

E: Hey, you were such a little kid.

MH: I remember the music and I-- I do have some of it in my... in my uh, notebook there, you know.

E: Oh, wow.

MH: If you want to hear what it sounded like.

E: I would love to.

HS: Is it bar music?

MH: No, I've pulled--

HS: You was at the bar with the performers?

MH: Yeah, they used to come in, just like a regular... band. It-- it was all ethnic music from uh, you know, Blues from the Lowlands. They used to have it on uh, on uh the radio on PBS. And they took that off. I hated it. I don't know if you ever heard it.

E: Mmm-mmm.

MH: Saturdays, it used to be on there until they changed their format. Let's see if I can get some uh -- that's why I brought this thing.

E: Oh, that's great.

MH: Let's see what I give you, I can give a little music.

E: What about um, say do you remember anything else about just kind of like could you point out any other things about that you remember just around you? So, where did the Italian family live?

MH: Italian family lived -- here's the cleaners, right here -- Italian family lived right behind us. And this was like an alley. See this alley here?

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And then over here was the guy that had the horse. One of these houses, right here. This building right here, I'll tell about that too. That was a factory and it was two stories high. And it was uh, um... abandoned. Windows were broken out - this is 1950. But used to go in there and play.

[[00:21:00]] - MH: And this is where we used to take sleigh rides, right down here.

E: Wow.

MH: See... the distance?

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And that was downhill. And what a ride we had. Um, you wanna know the Italian family - they were about right here.

E: Okay.

MH: And they're like one of these houses here.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: Now, beyond that there's not a lot of... 'cause that was like not our hood, you know. But you go down there were barbershops in through here, I remember that. And um, there was some kind of a big building there. They said it was a orphanage but I don't know if it was, it might have been this one. What does that say that is?

E: That one says it's a church.

MH: M'kay.

E: In here.

MH: And what year--

E: Mary W. Palmer Methodist Church.

MH: Okay.

E: Uh 1951, I think it's where this map is from.

MH: Okay, okay.

E: Did -- so, what was the -- what was the alley like behind your -- ? Well, you weren't really that connected to it, I guess.

MH: Yeah, I was right behind the corner building.

E: Yeah, did you guys hang out in the alley?

MH: Heck yeah.

E: Yeah?

MH: Oh, yeah. Alleys where kids lived. Lotta times uh, back then they had uh, commercial buildings like the catering company. They had these cement vaults and they had a door that would open in front and wover and you'd dump all the garbage in there. And if it was a restaurant, or anything like that in the summertime, if you lifted it up the stench'll knock you down. And the maggots would be just piled high.

E: Mmm.

MH: Well, when DPW -- trash guys come from the city with the city trucks, they had to be hand shoveled out.

E: Wow.

MH: Probably one of the lousiest jobs but in a couple weeks you get used to it. You know. But I remember as a kid our big was we'd always try to get newspapers and we'd get a bundle and we'd throw 'em in there and throw one in and get in on fire.

(E & MH laugh)

MH: Kill the maggots. *(Chuckles)* But behind every commercial building, and these were small businesses, they had that type of system. At the houses, like I said, they usually had a 55 yard in the alley and people would put all their trash in there.

E: Wow.

MH: And again, every street in Detroit had alleys.

E: Wow.

MH: Uh, a lot of real estate was used up in alleys. Um, the guy with the glass pile was about right here. And of course there was the house where the mother killed the chicken that time which is--

E: And that was right next to you.

MH: Right next to the -- to the North.

E: Just North of you.

MH: That house right there. Some of these houses I recall had uh, wood uh, dirt floors. Where it may have been a uh, a rec-- not a rec room but a mud room they call it. You know, where you come in the house first and it was that. And it would always be stuff in there like coal or whatever.

E: Hmm.

MH: You know.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: But then you'd go in the house proper. So that was kind of -- I had never seen dirt floors in a house before. You know, whatever.

E: Yeah.

MH: You know.

E: Yeah, wow.

MH: So.

E: Wow. So, let me rewind for one second. So, could you just say your name?

MH: Oh, my name is William Hawk, call me Bill. H-A-W-K, Hawk. Was born in Detroit March 9th, 1941.

[[00:24:00]] - MH: Um, before World War II started in December. Uh, grew up in Detroit. Lived in Detroit most of my life. Uh, went to uh, Catholic school first -- St. Ramon's, which was in -- near Schoenherr and 8 mile. And uh, went to um, Goodell, St. Ignatius, Washington Trade School when I was uh, in the uh, I believe 7th or 8th grade. I think it was 8th grade when I started there which was on Davison and Dequindre. Uh, studied tool and dye. Uh, learned a lot. Lot about everything. Um, from there uh, finished up at Denby the 11th and 12th grade. I got out by the -- literally the skin of my teeth. I was probably the worst student when it came to scholastic things, but that -- if it was mechanical I was right on top of it. Um, in 19, uh, 53 right around there we moved to uh, a house on Chelsea and Rosemary, which is near City Airport. And uh, I was goin' to St. Ignatius at the time -- Catholic school. And uh, was in the 6th grade. And because of the previous schooling I had -- had at St. Ramon's from the 1st and 5th grade, we had half day sessions. So, I only went to school 3 hours a day for 5 years. And uh, when I went to St. Ignatius, uh -- I didn't have a clue. I was in the 6th grade, but I was at third grade level. And I flunked the 6th grade. So, I begged my Dad to let me go to public school so I wound up going to Den -- not Denby -- but Goodell, which was on Dickerson and Chelsea. And a teacher by the name of Mr. Crawford, he was a World War II veteran and he was uh, had shellshock. If you dropped somethin' on the floor, he'd dive, 'cause he'd seen so much combat. And he came up to me one day and said 'You're really good with what you're doing with wooden stuff.' He said, 'I can't believe how good you are.' You know, 'cause we were making things. And he says, 'But I'm gonna tell you somethin'...' He says, 'You're not gonna make it in life.' He says uh, 'You're not cut out for scholastic stuff. All your grades are D's and E's.' But he says, 'In shop,' he says, 'You excel. So, I recommend you tell your Dad that you wanna go to trade school.' And I had heard about trade school's back then. Cass Tech, Wilbur Wright, Aeromechanics. Boy, I was ready for that. Aeromechanics, airplanes again, you know. So he says, 'No, no, no' he says, 'Nah, you won't be going to any of those schools.' He says, 'There's one though, that's perfect for you. Washington Trade.' So it was like I said, on Davison and Dequindre, and I wound up uh, signing up for it and a whole bunch of my buddies decided the same thing. They wanted to take the easy way out too. So, there's about five of us goin' to Washington Trade. And uh, (*chuckles*) I distinctly remember some bad incidents.

[[00:27:00]] - MH: But it's kind of a funny thing too. Uh, we would have money for the bus. And we'd take a bus sometimes and a lot of times we just blew our money. And Krajenke Buick, which was in uh, near Hamtramck -- the daughter of the owner used to come up Outer Drive where the bus stop was -- and we'd always thumb -- try to get a ride. She pulled up in a

T-Bird one time and she said 'You guys need a ride?' Yeah. So we got in a T-Bird, a little two-passenger T-Bird, there was three of us in there. And she says, 'Where you goin'?' We told her Davison and Dequindre. And she says, 'I'm goin' right near there.' She says, 'I'll drop you off there.' Great. So we had a ride. She stopped all the time. She was older, you know, she was probably in her 20s. And of course we were little punks, you know, thirteen or fourteen. Well, my buddy (*clears throat*) one day put his hand on her knee and she threw us out. (*Chuckles*)

(*E & MH chuckle*)

MH: So, no more T-Bird ride.

(*E laughs*)

MH: Terrible story. But we-we went to school at the Washington. You know, I wound up getting double promoted at Washington Trade. Now, I'm back to where I belong, you know. And the thing about -- you mentioned about w-- what did I do to school when we were on Lafayette. And my sister and I used to go out at 5:30-5:45 in the morning and wait for the bus. Be the uh, the Van Dyke bus, which was uh, the one that went down Lafayette. And it would take us to Van Dyke. Van Dyke to Gratiot, Gratiot to 7 mile road, 7 mile -- these are all transfers by the way, you know, your transfers--

E: Whoa.

MH: 7 mile to Waltham. Waltham to 8 mile and Waltham. And from 8 mile to Waltham we'd walk to school, which was two blocks to Catholic school St. Ramon's. We did that uh, for a while mostly. But uh, all the time we down there for almost three years. So...

E: Wow.

MH: Th-- that ride itself was an education.

E: How long did it take you to get from home-- ?

MH: A long time.

E: To school?

MH: A long time because we had to be -- had to be at school I think it was uh, 7 o'clock. Because we went to mass before class. And the mass is about an hour. And then we'd go to our classes. So, you know, the ride probably was you know 5:30-6:30, an hour and a half ride. And then the same thing comin' home. But was on half day session. So, I would go to school for the three hours plus church and then go to the bus and come home. So, I'd come home in the afternoon, you know, my sister'd come home later. And uh, it wasn't very much fun.

E: What was uh, what was the bus like?

MH: Uh, the bus was a diesel and it was GMC. And uh, at the time they were uh, they were in the process of -- the city they were buying, uh, uh-- diesel buses from General Motors. And there was a big conspiracy about that because they put the uh, the railways--

[[00:30:00]] - MH: --We had the street cars like on Gratiot, all the main streets, Woodward's, Gra-- all this, you know. And uh, they-- they got rid of the street car. Sold 'em to Mexico City. And they had those diesel size buses. Uh, the street cars were fun -- we loved them. And uh, the busses -- we hated them. (*Laughs*)

E: Why?

MH: Eh, noisy and bumpy, you know. And just lotta people in there and, you know, always, you know, snow in your boots and in the winter. And the leggins and just those. It just wasn't comfortable. And of course, we were going to school which made it even worse.

(*E laughs*)

MH: You know. The price of getting a ride. Um, yeah school was always a problem because it was, you know, in the beginning the foundation of education just wasn't there.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And uh, I still pay for that today. Um, there were a lot of different things that were fun, though. You know, it wasn't -- it wasn't all bad. It was fun. Like I was like a sponge. And I became a black-white guy. I talked like my buddies, you know. I don't want to do it here 'cause i-- i-- it's kinda -- I fear it would be insulting to do it. Somebody -- you know...

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: But I do it -- I can do it. I can go right back (*snaps*) like that. He's seen me do it. (*Laughs*) Again, it's another language. Um... and once, you know, once I figured it out, you know, like I said, droppin' a dime was the mistake I made at-- at the swimming pool. Once I learned that I learned to keep my mouth shut. (*Imitatively*) 'What'd you see?' I seen nothin'. (*Laughs*) 'Oh, what did he do?' I don't know. I wasn't lookin'. (*Laughs*) All my life. So, that's that. Um...

E: So, could you talk a little bit about -- cuz you told me earlier -- but I want to make sure we record it too. What do your parents do? And, could you tell the story of just how you came to live in Black Bottom from where you were living before?

MH: Well, we wound up in B-- Black Bottom... We were livin' -- before that we were livin' on Dresden State Fair which was on the Eastside of Detroit North by 8 mile. And because of the trip and the milk truck that my Dad had to take to the business now was a long arduous trip. And it -- he just didn't drive the truck there, he had to go to the creamery first and pick up the milk because in the catering company, they usually -- All Twin Pines products, all the dairy products - the eggs, the butter, the cream, the chocolate milk -- the whole nine yards. So, the first thing he'd do when he left the house in the morning -- like 3:30 in the morning -- he would drive to uh, at that time, the bottling plant was by Holy Cross Hospital, which was on Outer Drive -- on the curb. Where AC Spark Building -- where all that was back then later. And he would bring the truck in and he'd get his load -- his load it'd be set. All set up ahead of time. And he'd load the cases in. If it was Winter, he wouldn't need ice. If it was summer -- when I was helping him -- we'd get ice.

[[00:33:00]] - MH: So, my dad would go and get a coffee. He'd-- he'd set up his order for milk for the next day. He'd put down what he needed for the next day. And he'd pay his bill for the

previous day -- for the milk. Twin Pines was employee-owned, so at the end of the year they all got big, nice bonuses, if they sold a lot of milk.

E: Wow.

MH: Route 390 was my dad's route number and it was the biggest route at that Twin Pines. Uh, bottling plant. He had the biggest route in the city.

E: And where did his route go?

MH: His route went from the Belle Isle Bridge to downtown Detroit. From Jefferson to the River. And uh, I'll get into that but I wanna back up just one step about the ice. I was probably 7. I think. I couldn't have been 8 but I was about 7. And he'd pay the bill and have a coffee and a donut with the other milkmen. But he'd park the truck after he had the cases in there -- the cases of milk. And the case is all glass. All the bottles -- n-- no plastic, all glass. Half pints, pints, quarts. A-- and you had cream, half and half -- cream was pure cream. Half and half was half and half. You had Jersey -- Jersey milk which is heavy in cream and a lot of guys in the factory wanted it 'cause they needed it for energy. And they had homo -- which they called homo -- which was homogenized so that the cream and the milk would never form in the cold weather. The cream would always go to the top. But when it was homogenized or processed at the plant, it stayed, you know. Nothing separated. It all stayed homogenized. So, the ice house and there was a ramp. He-- he parked the truck there and there was a ramp, you know, a wooden ramp came down right to the truck. Right to the back of the truck about that high off the ground. That's where the floor was in the back. And the floor was lower and there were sides that were higher. Cases were piled up. It was a little aisleway. And the guy worked in the ice house - I never forget his name was Froggy. And they-- they nicknamed him Froggy because he talked like *(makes deep indistinguishable noises)* 'cause he was always in the ice house. His voice was wrecked. And he'd -- truck would pull in and my dad go in and then Froggy'd open the door and look to see who it is and he knew how much ice my dad wanted. It was a hot summer day, he'd want two--two hundred fifty pounders. That's two blocks of ice which is the size of a microwave, you know, like this. And it's five of 'em and-and the ice house they used to throw a--a color of paint in there - white. When they made the ice so you had these blocks were always uniform. So, when you went to cut that ice - you didn't actually cut it. You'd use an ice pick. You'd go down that line.

E: Hmm.

MH: *(Imitates ice pick)* And I did this many times. And you'd take the ice pick... *(Imitates ice pick)* and it splits. Now you got a fifty pounder. And you flip the fifty and you got-- you'd do it again this way and you got a 25 pounder. And you take the 25 pounder -- 7-years-old -- and you lift it to the top box that -- the top box of milk.

[[00:36:00]] - MH: And you might have 4 or 5 of 'em goin' down in a column. The outsides wood - the insides just wire. And it's like a draft. Ice on top, cold air comes down, and in the summertime it cools the whole stack.

E: Wow.

MH: So, your milk is cold.

E: Wow.

MH: You get-- you get cases -- five cases, five cases, five cases, five cases, and you might have a ten or a twelve cases and each one'll have a 25 pounder on top. Well, the ice would slide down and stop at the truck 'cause it couldn't go any further, and then uh -- I don't know if you know what tongs are?

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And it had -- I had tongs and I'd slap it on there. And as soon as it'd hit they'd close. And I'd pull and they set up the hooks. And then I'd struggle to pull that 250 pound into the truck. And I'd chop it all up and then the other one -- if it was a double day -- we needed more ice -- I had to do the other one. Pull it in as a complete block and let it sit -- don't chop it up. We'd chop that up later. You know, at the end of the day. Well then, from the creamery we'd go down to the catering company. On the route. Originally, you know, the industrial route but w-- when they built a catering business from the route, which we talked about earlier, that's uh, that's where we'd go. And so i-- instead of going to the catering company with this ride right now, I'm gonna take down to the riverfront. So, the things I remember about the riverfront is there's a place on Van Dyke near Rumell's called Marcus Hamburger. And Marcus Hamburger had a -- had a little Hamburger joint down there called Coffee and Donuts. And he'd go in and get a coffee and I used to go in and sit and I looked and there's little teeny weeny cereal boxes - first time I'd ever seen a little -- for kids. So I-- I had to have one of them everyday. You know, when I was with him. And then we'd start on a route and start at the Eastside first and work our way West. And I've written down some of that - some of the factories the best I can remember. And I'll try uh... I'll try to get this in some kinda sequence. Okay. Well, Park Davis, which is a pharmaceutical company that was part of this route and he used to drop off stuff at the boiler room. And then, the secretaries would come down and get their cream for their coffee and yogurt, if they wanted yogurt. And uh, you couldn't actually go in Park Davis. It was off-limits to civilians. Alongside of Park Davis was railroad track and they had a railroad track that carried all the materials that were being used in that whole long industrial belt -- all the way down to the Dequindre Cut.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: Which actually used to be a train. Used to turn there.

(Paper shuffles)

E: Where-- where was the Park Davis?

MH: Park Davis would be...

[[00:39:00]] - MH: Just East -- just West of the uh, um...

HS: It was converted to the Stroh Office.

MH: Yeah, that was later. But Park Davis was...

(HS talks)

MH: Right. It's right West of uh, um, uh Uniroyal tire. Uniroyal?

E: Okay, yep.

MH: So when Uniroyal ended, then Park Davis property started.

E: Okay.

MH: Now, right next to Uniroyal there was a bar called Ma's Bar and that's where my dad used to have lunch everyday. And if I was lucky I got a little bottle of coke.

E: Oh, here's Park Davis.

MH: *(Clears throat)* Okay.

E: Yeah, this is all Park Davis, actually.

MH: Mmm-hmm.

E: Here. Mmm-hmm.

MH: Do they show the railroad track here, at all, or not?

E: Uh, here it is.

MH: It's-- it should be like right on Atwater.

E: Right there.

MH: 'Cause Park Davis is right on the river.

E: Yeah, this is the river right here.

MH: And the track was down here. The part-- the part -- remember I told you about the cats and dogs were all pinned up? That'd be like this building here. They were dog catchers and they were used for experimental uh, it was medicine. And there was a lot of them there and it's a screening area with cages.

E: Wow.

MH: And it used to break my heart. I always started to go there and my Dad would yell at me 'Get outta there! *(Intelligible)* With none of them dogs!' You know, one of them deals. And the train used to run up and down there. It ran the whole length and Riley Stoker uh, I believe was a big founder. He was over in this area somewhere and there was another founder Babcock and Wilcox, they made boilers and stuff for buildings and they made steam. You know, heat steam in these big boilers and the steam would go out the building and heat and they usually made ships for propellership. And then uh, as you go down further there'd be Northern Crane was a big company down here. To the West, I can't specifically tell you what building it was. And then there was Portland Smith right downtown at the end of the milk route. That's um... that's probably where the Ren Cen buildings are right now.

E: Okay. Oh yeah, here's--

MH: You see Portland Cement anywhere?

E: This says Cement Mill.

MH: Yeah, that's it right there. And that's where the Boblo Bo-- that's where the Boblo Boat used to pull up right over here. Right here, used to be docked here.

E: Wow.

MH: And uh, over here on Hastings and Jefferson and if we can find Hastings that would be I-90, I-75 now.

E: Yep.

MH: Do you see--

E: I gotta switch to another page. 'Cause that's on the first or second page.

MH: Hastings was the next street to go after Black Bottom had, you know. But uh, the one thing I remember on Hastings and Jefferson was one of the businesses. It's Palace Model Laundry. And it was uh, it was around the clock operations seven days a week and they did all the uh, bedsheets and-and gloves, and aprons for all the restaurants and hotels--

E: Oh, wow.

MH: In the whole area which was truckloads.

E: Yeah, there's a lot of hotels around then.

MH: It was all women.

[[00:42:00]] - MH: It was what you could call a sweatshop now. Um, I remember they had those -- you know, that thing I was talking about -- the pressing for pressing the sheets. Steam presses. 'Member seeing them. And then, along the waterfront here on Atwater and those streets there was every kind of factory you can imagine. I-- I've written some 'em down, I'm trying to remember... One of 'em made leather goods for Harley Davidson. And uh, it was one of those s-- stops on the route. And you'd go in there and there were leather seats and making leather bags, you know, for the motorcycles. Jackets.

E: Wow.

MH: And then there was a place, uh -- made cables for speedometers and stuff. And some of these were smaller businesses they were mixed in but it was solid. There had to be thousands of people working in this -- in this corridor. Literally.

E: Wow.

MH: You look at B.F. Goo-- Look at uh, Uniroyal -- how big that plant was.

E: Yeah.

MH: And then, you take that plant and just try to figure down the size wise -- all these were factories. Now the other thing like I said politically when they wiped out Black Bottom they also wiped out people's transportation to their jobs. 'Cause there were a lot of people that were Black and they were working in jobs that were uh, basically uh, uh, service orientated. Like janitors and uh, you know, doing the sh-- doing the rotten jobs. You know, which is what it was. Well, they wiped-- they wiped their houses out. Now, they couldn't walk to work, so then they get displaced, so it's a double-whammy here. And I also remember going in the Foundries when I was little. I had to pick up the milk bottles -- the empties. And I'd also carry in two of those crates of milk. So, I had -- I had eight quarts on each side of me -- so it was four gallons. And, I would walk in and they'd all come runnin' over to get the milk 'cause they knew we were here. And I remember distinctly and I describe these guys as uh, um, I thought they were giants. I was a little kid. I mean literally thought they were giants. And they were. They were -- they were as tall as NBA Basketball players and as big as the uh, NFL Football players. And I remember one time I handed a guy a quart of chocolate milk and a quart of Jersey and he chugged the uh, the chocolate down and I was gonna walk away and he went like that and he chugged the Jersey down then he handed me twinkies. He saved me the trouble of having to go get the empties. And the empties, they used to put 'em along the outside wall and the inside of the building. Of the Foundry of this particular one which was down by the Cut. Can't remember the name of the place. And I would skirt around while they were working out in the middle. And they had all these sand moles that they were pouring by hand with ladles of molten metal. Different kinds. Some of them was brass, some of 'em was iron, some was steel compound. I didn't know it then what they were but it was hot and dusty and dirty and noisy. And stunk. You know, from the burning of everything.

[[00:45:00]] - MH: Kind of hard to breathe. But I would go in there and get the bottles. I remember I dropped one and my dad kicked me right in fanny 'cause that was a one cent deposit. And he-- he had warned me beforehand he said 'Don't ever pick any of those bottles up with your hands wet. And I had gotten my hands wet with somethin' I -- they're wet. Maybe the ice or whatever I -- it slid outta my hand. So, I got a little butt kick on that. But uh, those are the things I remember.

E: I just found Hastings and Jefferson.

MH: Okay that's where Palace Model would be on the um, Westside.

E: Okay.

MH: Of uh, Hastings and it would be on the -- on this first -- see here--

E: Yep.

MH: The Westside. And then on the Northside of Jefferson this--

E: Oh, the Northside of Jefferson's here. Oh yeah, there it is.

MH: Does it say Palace Model?

E: Yep.

MH: Yeah. Cool.

E: Palace Model Laundry.

MH: Well, kids gotta memory, don't he?

E: It's amazing. I can't believe you remember all this.

MH: Well, yeah there was a Ford dealership over here. Downtown Ford. One of these was down, we used to stop there and sell milk. It was a dealership and there was this Chevy dealership over here somewhere. Forget the name of that one, too. *(Pause)* But that was -- that was my introduction, you know, to everything. I used to speak -- just like with the Black language I picked it up -- I used to speak to the factory workers in uh, Hungarian bro-- they called it broken English. And I used to do that real good. I can't do it now, though, but I used to do it 'cause they'd always get, you know, the plurals they'd drop 'em off. There'd be no plurals, you know, kinda sounded weird. And then they'd mispronounce -- if you were around them which I was - you know, 'cause I had to communicate with these guys too -- I picked it up. First few days or so, I didn't understand what they were saying and I'd look at my dad and he'd say *(indistinguishable)* whatever. And he used always carry a changer. Pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters. *(Shuffling sound)* You know. That fast -- here's your change. Not like at a grocery store, at all. You know, when I was a kid I used that too. I used to watch them come in and up add up what's in their hands and I'd look for what money they were carrying and I had the change - dollars and cents right there by the time it got to me.

E: Wow.

MH: Ah-

E: So, could you tell me a little bit more about your parents? Like where did -- were they born in Detroit too?

MH: Well, my mother was born in Detroit. Uh, her mother -- my grandmother and my gr-- grandfather they uh, they lived on Hastings near that really nice church that's down there. Now, I can't remember St. Anne's or something.

E: St. uh...

HS: I think St. Joseph's.

E: St. Joseph. The German church.

MH: Yes, so they were German. Thiery, T-H-I-E-R-Y.

HS: Off of Gratiot.

[[00:48:00]] - MH: Not-not double r's like the friend -- your friend. Anyways, um, they lived there uh, right close to downtown when they were married. And they were married uh, I can't

remember the exact date but my mother was born in like 1908, or something like that. Um, and my dad was born in Pennsylvania in uh, Beaver Falls. Jernamth town. That's where Jernamth was born. Uh, he was born in 1900 and uh, he left home at 13. He left, really left. He was working in a glass foundry making uh, 50 cents a day. At thirteen-years-old. He'd come home and he'd had to give the money right to his mother. And uh, I've seen pictures I'm not sure if it's--if it's the correct uh, house. But it was a tar paper shack the size of a garage. Um, his father worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was a conductor. And later on he uh, when he left that. He became a store owner in Pittsburgh. A small store. I... saw him once in my life. And it was in the uh, 40's. Late forties when we went down there, you know. There was like four people and my ma, and dad, another couple, and then myself. I was in the back in the window of the car laying on that shelf...

(E & MH chuckle)

E: Wow. And so what were your parents' names?

MH: Um, my dad's name is William Jacob, my mother's name is Vera. Vera. And uh, he met my mother in 19- right around 1937-38. And my dad's first wife passed away um... during the Depression. My dad came up here -- he hit Detroit about 1920 and he got a job working uh, on the construction of Jefferson Ave Chrysler Plant.

E: Wow.

MH: And when the construction was filled, the sign went out Help Wanted, he went right in and got a job. He worked there and then he was transferred to uh, Highland Park, uh Chrysler Plant. And he wound up getting into management and then the Depression hit and uh, he got booted along with everybody else. And uh, he literally was scrounging for a living. He-- he was selling um, hops and barley to people. It was legal to make beer, you know, during Prohibition. If it -- I think it was legal for you but everything was illegal anyways but he was doing that and making pennies. My um, my brother and two sisters wound up in Belle River, Canada living with relatives because he couldn't -- he couldn't support 'em-

E: Your older siblings.

MH: Mmm-hmm.

E: And what were their names?

MH: Uh, Pat was the oldest -- Patricia. Jerry -- Gerald, my brother was the next one and then um, Marilyn was the third... one. And uh, Marilyn lived on Dresden with us. She was, you know, she wasn't married at the time. Then she did get married shortly thereafter. Um...

[[00:51:00]] - MH: My brother... Getting -- kinda spinning back before I get to the family. Best way I could say about my family, you might want to call it dysfunctional. 'Cause uh, my parents were heavy drinkers. Um... And the funny thing is though is that had a buddy and I was real close with his family and his mother well, she was like my mother. I never had a problem with my mother, my dad was the problem mostly in my life, you know. But uh, and this is kinda -- hits me in the head now like I don't know how I missed it but I said to my friend, I says, 'Why doesn't your mother and dad go to the bar?'. 'Cause there was a bar on Chelsea right across the street from the house. My dad picked a... area. I said, 'Why don't your parents ever go to the

bar? What's wrong with them?' My logic said there was something wrong with his parents 'cause they didn't go to the bar. Dysfunctional, right?

HS: Can I tell somethin'? Or, steer you a little bit? A little bit about um, Great Grandma Thiery. And it was kinda both sides 'cause the one side um, Grandpa Hawk had the kids taken care of for a couple of years 'till he got remarried.

MH: Right.

HS: But on-- on Gr--Grandma Hawk's side her mother had adopted kids during...

MH: My grandmother uh -- I, I'll get to that. That's uh, um Geri -- she was married around 1890s, right in there. Um... she was uh, she was Lutheran. And she changed over to Catholic to marry my grandfather. And she was very active in the church and she worked with uh -- at that time -- when uh, babies were uh, out of wedlock they would go to the church. And then the church would farm them out. And my grandmother used to take all these children and she took a lot of 'em in through the years. 20's -- all the way-- She still was uh, uh watching children when I was living on Algonquin. In fact, there was two. There was Michael and there was uh, Ann Marie. And um, Michael, we lost track of him a long time ago. But Ann Marie was Beverly, my sister's, girlfriend 'cause they were both the same. So, we had contact all the way up to present time with Ann Marie.

E: Oh, wow. And she lived near St. Joseph's?

MH: Uh, she -- I don't know at -- when we were at Algonquin they were living on Somerset when she was watching all these kids. So, I don't know, you know, how they got 'em but it was through St. Vincent De Paul's -- something around there.

E: Okay.

MH: But she did watch *a lot* of kids. One of them she was watching she fell so much in love with she-- she wound up adopting him. That would be my adopted uncle Earl. And uh, he found out he was adopted when he was 18. He didn't know, he went haywire, joined the army.

[[00:54:00]] - MH: Became army all his life. And uh, he was an interesting person. He was extremely gifted, he would sit on a piano, he would play classical music and he'd stop right in the middle. He get up and walk away. But when he used come around our house, we had a piano. He used to do that, it used to drive us nuts. And he would -- could draw caricatures of people -- perfect. He'd sit there (*makes "pow" sound effect*). Every base that he went to, he became in the base newspaper. He was this cartoonist. He wound up while the Vietnam thing was goin' on. He actually went into World War 2, um, right the middle. And-- and stayed in there. He was a Vietnam drill sergeant and was teaching all these green beret guys how to survive. So, every few years he would show up at Christmas time at our house in Chelsea. One year he shows up and uh, he was a heavy drinker in the bar right across the street. But, it was in January right around Christmas, right in there. And it was cold, bitter, bitter cold. And he shows up and he's got his-- his duffel bag and stuff. And he comes in the house, 'Hi how are you?' Everything. And he takes his duffel bag. 'Where you going?' (*Imitatively*) 'I'm-- I'm gonna pitch my tent.' And the snow is about a foot and a half deep. And he pitches a tint, gets a sleeping bag, goes to sleep. I asked him, you know, when he came to the next day. He says, 'I gotta stay in condition. This is what...' -- you know. So, then the bar -- this continued all the

way until he actually retired from the service. And uh, he was gettin' pretty incoherent towards the end.

(At [[00:55:36]] MH continues tangent conversation about his family members until [[01:01:32]])

E: Oh, could you tell the story about your dad buying the milk business and the-- his competitor?

MH: Yeah, okay... He um... he was working for Briggs Manufacturing. And Briggs, uh, was on Conners and Algonquin. On Co-- excuse me -- Canfield. And during the war my dad worked there as a -- as a worker in the war. Building war stuff. And when the war ended, he saw this advertisement either on a poster, or something, or on a telephone pole. It said milk route for sale. Well, at the time, there was a -- there was a-- a Twin Pines, uh, Satellite... building there where they used to bring milk for the guys that were further away. You know, the-- from the Creamery. So, he inquired about it and it turns out he bought the milk route for 350 do-- uh, 450 dollars. Which I've showed you... the receipt. Bill of sale, which is uh, September 26th, 1945. And uh, he was a milkman. Um, the route he had was an industrial route. And a guy that was in the area where the catering company -- at the time -- Industrial Catering Company who used to cater to all these factories and stuff. Sandwiches and soups and so forth. He told my dad, 'I wanna buy that route of yours.' My dad says, 'It's not for sale.' He said, 'Well, I'll just-- I'll just run you outta business and take your route.' And uh, you never said that to my Dad -- just didn't happen. That afternoon, after he got done with the route, he was in the credit union Twin Pines borrowing money to go in the catering business.

[01:03:00] - MH: The following day, he already had a storefront, which is like at Elmwood. And within two weeks they were makin' soup and sandwiches... And delivering them on the milk truck... Th-- the man was so great that within a year there was 10 routes. And my dad was buying... trucks. You know, panel trucks to deliver the food. And they pulled the... tray outta the back doors like a Chevy pickup -- a panel truck, really. And then, you put the legs down and the guys'll come and get the -- get the hamburgers and they had these... uh, aluminum containers with tops on 'em. Hot boxes, they called them. They were sterno on the bottom. Like you see at a wedding, you know. And I'll go into that too. Um... And keeping warm. And it just exploded as a big, big, big... And my brother and all these drivers they're hiring and then we got all these trucks comin' in down there. From uh, different uh, um, vendors of food. Like Silver Cup Bakery used to be up on Forrest. And of course, I remember going there and they had what they called a Pullman loaf. It was a restaurant loaf. It's this long. They were strictly for sandwiches. You know, these little loaves... So, we got a lot of our bread from Silver Cup... *(Pauses)* And by 19-- uh... By 1952 or 3, right after-- I think it was '53. It had grown so much that they needed a bigger building. So, they took and moved the business to... uh, Iroquois and Mack. It was on the uh, Northwest Corner. It's a long building. They had... space for trucks to come in the back and then s-trucks that were delivering things could come in there. So you didn't leave the cans of soups and stuff out there... in the road.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And they were there, uh, 'til around '58 -- right in there. And they bought property on um, French Road and Odell which is right near... City Airport. Right behind Cusimanos, uh, Produce. And uh, they-- a friend of theirs built the building and it became bigger and bigger and bigger. And that's when I came in, in '62. I worked up there -- I worked up there through '66. Like I said, I got -- had enough of it. Um, I introduced the stainless steel truck -- the nice new

ones, the one's that are pretty. And uh, my dad was burned out. My brother, he was like, 'Eh.' You know. So, I got out. 'Cause I didn't wanna -- you know -- I was pushin' too hard. And I was... uh, getting bricked-bricked in. So I said, to hell with this.

E: A-- and you were talking about... I just don't wanna miss this part of the story. So, you were talkin' about when your -- when your dad first started the catering business, you had neighbors... that were... makin' the food. Or, people who lived in the--

MH: That's wh-- That's-- Th-- th-- that's-- That-- The two ladies -- Montez and Maddy.

[[01:06:00]] - MH: They lived on... right where the school is now. Martin Luther... They lived on the Southside of Lafayette down about a half a block from Elmwood to the East. And uh, I don't know how he came upon her. He might've had a 'help wanted' in the window when they were first starting. But... right away he's got a cook, but the kids and-- Uh, we were still -- him -- were still living on Dresden. So, he was making that trip everyday. And then, in the beginning, when I started goin' with him on the Industrial Route, we were still on Dresden. You know, summertime... Easter... Thanksgiving, Christmas -- whenever I wasn't in school, I was with him. And uh, helpin' him out... You know, I worked. I really did work. *(Chuckles)* Anyways, it was exciting, you know, for a little kid. Sit in that milk truck. Well, you didn't sit 'cause he used to drive. Had a seat but he would drive it -- he'd stand up. 'Cause milkmen didn't sit. But for the longer trips sometimes he'd sit down.

MH: And I'd always be sittin' on a case over here or somewhere. I'd get an empty case and sit down. Bouncing around. Summertime the doors are open, you watch everything goin' by. You know, it's kinda cool.

E: Wow.

MH: I do have a-- I do have a difficult milk truck at home, right now.

(E chuckles)

E: That's awesome.

MH: My-- my son from my second marriage...

E: Wow.

MH: We have a lotta cars we work on. We have custom cars and hot rods and...

E: Cool.

MH: All that. We do all that. It's in here. I'll show you pictures later but... the-- the thing about... that catering route it-- it morphed from a milk route, into a catering route, into a big business, and then a bigger business. And then... in the uh, '60's when my Dad passed away in uh, '66, we-- we all signed off... for my mother to take that side 'cause, we know, a-- as sons and daughters and all that -- we-- we could've, you know, petitioned for our... piece. We didn't. No-- nobody wanted it... So, my brother and my mother owned it. Then my mother... She-- she didn't have a part no more. She used to work down there too with my dad a lot. They'd cook big roast beefs and stuff on the weekend. You know, so... But uh, w-- when he was gone, she

was done with that. And my brother uh, bought her out. And then my brother took and used the old Twin Pines thing -- employee owned. And divided that company up into the employees. So each driver was -- had a piece of the action.

(At [[01:08:26]] MH goes on a tangent about his brother's later business ventures until [[01:13:40]])

E: What else-- What are some other things... Um... I'm tryna think of some--some more questions specific to Black Bottom... to ask you.

(MH enters a brief tangent about his memories of tires as a child until [[01:15:48]])

MH: Well, the Peacetime Draft started in 1940. So, those neighborhoods around uh, Black Bottom -- a lot of the guys were drafted, as even before the war.

E: Hmm.

MH: You know, when you turned 18.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: If they registered. Um... during the war, and uh, it stood out... big in my mind, especially when we lived up near... 8 Mile. Where Osborne High School sits today. Huge, huge acreage and it was filled with quonset huts.

E: Hmm.

MH: And there was quite a few. I mean, there were... over a hundred qu-- quonsets in it. Each quonset was two families. It was split in the center of the wall. Family on each side of the quonset. Um... and that was to house people coming up from the South that were gonna work in the factories during the war. They-- there was no place to put them. So, the government had to do somethin' quick. So they were quonsets that uh, at where Osborne is. There were quonsets all on Connors from Gratiot. All the way down past uh, Warren. On Connors. Uh, there were quonsets, uh, on -- by Davidson. And uh, 6 Mile area. So we called them Projects. But they were h--housing for people coming from the South. And-- and Black Bottom-- You--you had a lot of Black population, as you move towards uh, East Grand Boulevard. And--and east of Grand Boulevard, you had people mostly from the South. We called 'em hillbillies... That's people from the South. And that kinda went all the way up to where... the Chrysler Plant is on Jefferson. That whole area around Jefferson and--and the side streets. Where most -- not all -- but a lot of people from the South.

E: Hmm.

MH: And when we were teenagers, we used to run down there and chase all the girls. 'Cause the girls were -- they liked guys from the North... We had money.

E: White--white people from the South... living kinda--

MH: All white.

E: -On the other side of the cemetery.

MH: Yeah, one side - yeah. One side's all Black and cross over from, like, East Grand Boulevard... to the east -- it was all white.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: But in that corridor of Jefferson...

[[01:18:00]] - MH: You got -- got mostly Black people in Black Bottom. You know, probably 99%. And then, on the other side it's almost all... white. But their a-- most of them are from the South.

E: Hmm.

MH: I don't know if you ever been able to uh... you know, pick that out of anything.

E: No. I--I've never heard that before. But, you know, I have heard that there was a lot of racial tension right around that area.

MH: The racial tension was more in the squeaky neighborhoods like where I lived. On Chelsea... Um, in 16 years, from the time we're talking about Black Bottom being destroyed... 16 years to the riots. *(Pauses)* The Black population of Detroit had... gone about as far as Harper and Gratiot... In 16 years... So, Lafayette and Elmwood, Harper and Gratiot -- 16 years... That's how hard it was for Blacks to displace whites to get into houses. To make it-- to make it a simpler... explanation. It was... more... more dirty in that explanation. Um, um, personally I looked at what happened as -- as in the riots -- which I'm getting to here in a minute. That... um, it was more of civil unrest. Uh, the guy, when he was, you know, I *(mimically)* I can take it no more. *(Chuckles)* You know.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: So the explosion happened. But it wasn't a riot. And I have proof. This is not urban legend... Some of the parts, yeah, there was--was activity... You know. Most of the uh, w--warfare was on the white side. They had all the bullets. The little Black neighborhoods did too but the push was more from the government. They brought in the troops, they brought in the police... and they try to encapsulate this so-called riot. Which it wasn't. Um, I'm gonna show you a movie, it's gonna blow your mind. *(Pauses)* Three days after the riots started in '67, uh, I jumped on my Harley motorcycle. I grabbed my uh, Kodak instamatic, uh, movie camera -- super 8... And I proceeded to go to some of my old neighborhoods. And uh, I went to Harper and Gratiot because a friend of mine owned a bar... there. And I just wanted to see what was goin' on there. And I did... And that bar did get burned down... After these movies. Couple days later. Um... and I'll show these movies to you. I--I did uh, let TV 2 have this film and they used one little segment in one of their documentaries. And it's just a segment that shows a window and it says, 'Soul Brother.' With some kid standin' outside. I thought they would use more but they didn't. But I have it here... But I also have it-- I don't know if you wanna. You--you'll be able to hear the music but you won't see the pictures on there.

E: That's okay.

MH: But you can hear the music.

(At [[01:21:07]] there is a brief tangent about family perspectives and a wedding MH's father attended while he prepares to show E a short film until [[01:23:06]])

MH: Anyways... *(A brief pause)* Like I said, 16 years- *(Mumbles something)* And the movement only went that far... Um this-this gonna hurt you to see this but i-it's-

(At [[01:23:29]] MH searches and narrates over his playlist then selects a blues song similar to the music he heard in Black Bottom at [[01:25:43]])

MH: Here we go, Jimmy Reed. Now, there it is. There's that harmonica. Now, that's what poured outta that bar across the street. From the get go. 8:30-9 o'clock, sun's gettin' down in summertime and boom. They're on. Goes to 2 in the morning. Like I said, my sister and I would be sittin' there like this. *(Pantomimes listening to music)* Listening and watching the parade. All kind of activity. Cars pullin' up, lot of double parking back then. No place to park --double park. *(Words muffled)* It was hell--

E: Most people would drive?

MH: Well, some would.

E: Some would.

MH: Most of 'em probably... right from the neighborhood. But people that knew the bar, obviously, they were coming there for the night's entertainment. No place to park, they were double parked. Of course, they play hell when the fire engine would come around the corner. *(Chuckles)* They'd hear the siren, they'd all run out and get their cars outta the way... But there's the sound. Give you an idea. And from that I'll go to uh, to a movie. Uh, gotta find my movie...

(Blues music continues to play in background, as MH searches for movie until [[01:26:53]])

MH: Now, I did this uh, like three days after it started. I went down on a motorcycle. I had my helmet on. Like I used to wear a helmet back then... *(Sighs)* And uh--

E: And where were you livin' at the time?

MH: At the time I was livin' in Harper Woods.

E: Okay.

MH: With my... first wife--

E: First wife.

MH: Yeah. His Ma. *(Refers to HS)* And she's in here. You'll see her for... momentarily. And we had our real nice little... Thunderbird. Parked in the driveway. Upward and onward, right? *(Pauses)* You see, I gotta lot of movies. This is one of my-- I won't show that now.

HS: Quick insert. I've heard just through my own... research which is pretty out... I've a lot of those national acts like Johnny Lee Hooker, all the old time--

MH: Those guys were all great. That music--

HS: They all came through that...

MH: I love it.

HS: They all performed li-- may have been the actual bar he was talking about.

E: Yeah, yeah. I don't know about--

HS: My suspicion is you may have been privy to like some really...

E: I mean--

HS: Crazy, off-the-hook--

MH: There's no doubt about it--

HS: --Performances by these legendary--

MH: These guys were professionals and they carried their instruments into the bar... And like I said, you know, once--once the-- Once the booze start flowin'... Okay, here you go. You ready for this? I added the music... myself. *(Pauses)* It'll start in a minute. *(A brief pause)* I'll explain where you're at when we get goin'.

(Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On?" begins to play in background, as MH plays short film.)

MH: Gratiot and Harper.

E: Whoa. Look at the smoke.

MH: That's going towards Downtown.

E: Wow.

(Background music)

MH: Mr. G's, you'll see it over there. That's my buddy's bar. Right there.

E: Oh, yeah.

MH: Now, what do you see there? A bunch of white guys drivin' in their car. Nobody's shootin' at anybody. *(A brief pause)* YMCA's right around the corner over here.

E: Okay.

(Background music)

MH: (*Indistinguishable*) Had a gun. Policeman with a shotgun. Military... Guy with a gun and helmet. That's Gratiot Auto Supply--

E: Where is this?

MH: That's Gratiot and Harper.

E: Okay.

MH: That used to be called the H--Hot Rod Shop. (*A brief pause*) Detroit City Airport. Some of the film that I took... never came back to me. After-- when developed. It was pulled -- somebody--

E: Oh.

MH: Somebody got it.

E: Really?

MH: Yeah... This is uh, St. Jean and Jefferson. That's the police station -- used to be there. See all the armored people.

E: Wow.

MH: Over here, if you look closely, you see a tank. Military tank. You see it?

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: Just for a second. This is Kercheval -- heading towards Downtown.

E: Okay. Oh, so you're in-in Black Bottom now.

MH: I'm m-- I'm goin' all over.

E: Yep. Wow. On Gratiot and Kercheval?

MH: This is Kercheval itself.

E: Okay.

MH: Headed... towards Downtown.

E: I see.

[[01:30:00]] - MH: A&P store. I don't know if you ever heard of A&P.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: But they're like Krogers. A guy died in that building, I believe. He got burned. Look at the cars, look at there-- Nothin' newer in '67, right? *(A brief pause)* So, on the other side of the street on Kercheval, buildings burned out. This is gettin' towards down when you get to Van Dyke area.

E: Okay.

MH: As you head down.

(Background music)

E: Wow.

MH: I'm on a motorcycle filming that.

E: Geez.

(Background music)

MH: Look at that. Two-story buildings. These are all storefronts right near Van Dyke and Kercheval. *(A brief pause)* See Soul Brother.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: *(Reads sign)* Don't--don't break on our store 'cause we're Brothers. *(A brief pause)* Where do you see the shooting? Where's the-- You know. Civil insurrection -- that was it. But it wasn't a ri-- It was not a riot. Helicopter, National Guard, Detroit City Airport... Fence around the airport. *(A brief pause)* That's actually storefronts...

E: Wow.

MH: T-bird, ex-wife.

(E chuckles)

MH: With a bee-hive -- with a beehive hairdo. There you go.

(E chuckles)

(MH stops the film)

E: Oh, that was awesome... Wow.

MH: I got a lot of stuff in here.

E: D--Did you know that the Detroit Historical Museum is trying to collect video and--

MH: Really?

E: --And oral histories on '67. They did this--

MH: You have contact there?

E: Yeah. I'll put you in touch with them.

MH: Imma put you in touch with 'em.

E: They did uh, they a huge project and they're--they're tryin' to kind of--

MH: Imma put you in touch with 'em.

E: Oh, you know 'em?

MH: No. I have this. *(Pauses)* This--this--this is that--

E: Oh, is that your video? Oh, that's so great.

MH: This part of the video starts uh-- *(Reads label)* Skip to Detroit, da, da, da, let me see. I think I had it written on here. Oh. *From Start to Detroit Unrest. 27 minutes.*

E: Okay.

MH: Now, if you can jump forward.

E: Mmm-hmm.

MH: There's so much on here that went missing. 'Cause that's only... like 4 minutes.

E: A short clip, yeah.

MH: But you start 27 minutes in. I'm gonna give you the envelope and this is how you're gonna get it back to me.

E: Put it in there?

MH: Yes and seal it.

E: Cool.

(At [[01:32:19]] MH begins tangent on family videos, his sister's husband, and flying until [[01:40:46]])

HS: Are you--are you um, approaching it more towards an architectural perspective or like uh, societal aspect, or--

E: Well, I mean, my... really. It's really, like, kind of... We're just tryna hear whatever people have to say. I mean, I think it's just -- we're just trying to find people who have memories of that place and just kind of, you know--

HS: Establish a history.

E: Yeah. I-- I don't know-- There's n--not a-- necessarily any real thing, specifically, that I'm tryna... kind of hear from people. It's more just like -- we're just tryna meet folks and hear, you know... Whatever your take on it is.

HS: Discovering issues (*words muffled*).

E: Yeah.

MH: The cleaners guy that I worked at -- for a quarter. I do remember him complaining about what was happening. And he thought that he was gonna get his business taken. Which of course, did happen. And so-- But that was before that happened. They were--they were in that stage one, like you said.

E: Uh, huh.

MH: That was--

E: Yeah, I wanted to about that. Just like what your memories were of that. And if you remember it? If you noti-- If you knew-- understood what was happening.

MH: I went and saw it. I actually walked on Lafayette and looked at the houses being wrecked. And felt, you know, felt-- It hurt me. 'Cause I thought, 'Wow, look at them neat windows and look at this, look at that.' Even as a child, I recognized--

[[01:42:00]] -MH: You know, somethin' of structure that was beautiful. To me, it was. You know. And... the thing about-- Like I said, going--going to the catering route, first on the river and then moving physically down there, I had a better understanding later on, as this was all happening. As I left that neighborhood. In my mind, I didn't leave. I--I knew what happened to those people. And I hated it. And when I heard about Hastings Street, I hated that. I used to go up Hastings Street in the catering trucks. I--I was always the guy that had to work Sunday night. Midnight. And go to Stroh's Brewery first. And all the trucks would come up with red noses. (*Chuckles*) 'Cause you could drink beer then. But I'm there at 2 in the morning. Catering truck. Then I'd go down Hastings and I'd go, uh, North. And there was a Square D. Electric. It was a factory there. I used to stop there. And there from Square D., I used to have to go to Murray Body, which was on the Westside of the street. Used to make all the bodies for Ford Motor Company cars. And it turned into a huge, gigantic warehouse. All-- they're all kind of small businesses and all these sections. It's all sectioned off. And so, I'd go in there and I'd hit four, five of them drivin' in the truck. Right in the big factory. (*Chuckles*)

E: Wow.

MH: And then back -- comin' back, you know, some other little stops. Um, my dad at one time, got into the vending machines. And he had vending machines at uh, Wonderbread, which is the gambling place now. And the problem with the early vending machines -- it was soup, especially Chili -- cans would blow up. They'd get hot -- too hot. 'Cause you couldn't control it properly. And he'd get called to come down there and there'd be beans all over the inside of the machine. (*Chuckles then says something indistinguishable*) And in some of the factories, there was one-- it was one uh-- when the catering thing was goin' on... This'll be probably '54, '55. I used to go with my brother sometimes on the route. And he had one stop that was called

Nit-an-hour. And it was the third floor up, it was all steps. 'Bout a million steps and he used to carry 2, 15... gallons. Stainless steel. Coffee cans. You know, when they pour. Up those steps everyday.

E: Whoa.

MH: And he always used to tell me, later on (*imitates brother*) 'Aw, Nit-an-hour, that where my knees went.'

(*E & MH chuckle*)

MH: I used to follow him up. Just with the cream and I was-- (*Chuckles*) Nit-an-hour.

E: Nit-an-hour.

MH: It was all women up there sewing. You know. All by hand -- doing whatever it was that they did.

E: So, and tell me again, what were the years that you lived on Lafayette and Elmwood?

MH: We moved there in '50. Um and then we left... probably right around the end of '52. 'Cause I was like maybe-- It may have been '53, I'm not quite sure of that. But I think I was 12 or 13 when we moved to the new neighborhood. So, what would I be in the 6th grade?

E: 12 probably.

MH: So that was 12 then.

(*From [[01:44:49]] until the end of interview MH proceeds to go on a tangent about family pictures and the lives of his friends and relatives*)

END

[[02:03:00]]

PART 2

[[00:00]] - (*HS goes on a tangent about his experience as a child at the Rooster Tail until [[00:02:03]]*)

MH: Yeah, there was a lot going on in Detroit. You know, the phrase was "burn baby burn" later on. This was in the 70's when we moved there.

HS: It's people that made the best out of--

MH: These people used to come to the boat. And it would freak 'em out. You know, people I-- that knew from working there. 'Cause as soon as the sun started to go down you'd hear the guns start goin' off. And then you'd see the fires comin' up from the houses on fire.

E: Wow.

MH: And I smile about it, but it-- all through that neighborhood down there that's what was goin' on.

E: Yeah.

MH: We couldn't do nothin' about it.

(From [[00:02:30]] until the end of the interview MH discusses his boat experiences on the river including a party he attended at the Rooster Tail)

END

[[00:05:35]]

PART 3

[[00:00:00]] - MH: But uh, yeah, she did work there.

E: Wow. So--so, yeah. So the angle for the thing is to make this kind of interactive thing where people can actually upload stuff too. You know, so if you had seen on the website you could s-- you know, submit photographs--

MH: Uh, huh.

E: To be associated with a different thing or... Um, so that's kind of our long term goal but that's-that'll be probably another year of just workin' on that and figurin' out how it's all gonna work.

MH: Okay.

E: So, yeah. So, that's kinda the game plan. Alright, I gotta go now.

MH: Are you ready for recording?

E: I'm ready.

MH: Yeah, I remember a couple of other things on Lafayette and Elmwood. When we were young looking out the window and nothin' to do in the summertime, usually towards the middle of the day they'd uh, they'd start-- The vendors start coming out. And two vendors in particular. I remember be the-the truck with the open sides and vegetables from uh, the Italian vegetable guy's that used to sell. And uh, they would yell so everybody knew they were coming. And they'd go, *(imitates men)* 'Wado Melu!' And everybody knew like they were comin'. They were watermelons on sale because they had a b-- truckload of 'em. And everybody'd grab watermelons in the summertime, you know. And the other thing I remember too, is-- was kinda neat was there was a vendor that used to have uh, a bicycle with a... a big box in front and two wheels. It was like an ice cream truck... back then. That you peddled. But he was selling uh, the um, the um, Mexican, uh, tamales. And he would do the same thing. He'd sing *(imitates*

man) 'Hot too-malee!' (*Chuckles*) And people would run out and buy a handful of tamales for like a nickel a piece, you know. And th-those were nice-- nice fond memories and uh, the watermelons were great and so was the tamales.

(E & MH chuckle)

E: That was awesome.

MH: That's it. (*Chuckles*)

E: Awesome.

END

[[00:01:47]]