

Diane Kutsch

Interview at Concordia House 10/30/2020

Diane Kutsch: I am the storyteller. My name is Diane Kutsch. I am 72 years old. Today is October 30th, 2020, and we are at Concordia House.

Lynne Haynes: And I am interviewing Diane Kutsch. My name is Lynne Haynes. I am 52 years old. Today is October 30th, 2020, and we are at Concordia House in Kirkwood, Missouri.

So Diane, just to get started, just kind of tell me, like, where did you grow up? What was your family like? That kind of thing.

Diane: I grew up in Dubuque, Iowa. Never moved from that area until I was 21. We grew up on a street, I guess in the center of town. We grew up in St. Columbkille's Catholic Parish, so our life was centered around home and our parish.

We didn't travel off that area very much. We would go out to my cousin's farm. We would go up to Backbone State Park about once a year for a beach day. And it was just a great way to grow up. Lots of friends on the street. Like they say, you know, you went out and played until the street lights came on. Yeah, so that's how we grew up.

Lynne: Gotcha. So tell me about Dubuque in the winter.

D: Dubuque is very cold and windy in the winter. Lots of snow, but I do like the snow, so I'm always happy to see it down here.

L: [laughter] Don't get as much down here as we did before.

D: [laughter] No, no. No, and even then, you know, we'd go out and play, and my mom would put sandwich bags on our feet in the boots to try to keep dry. Never stopped us from going outside to play.

L: Gotcha. What was your favorite thing to do out in the winter?

D: Oh, build snowmen, and snowball fights, and sledding.

L: Gotcha. And did you say, do you have brothers and sisters?

D: Two sisters. Two older sisters. I was the youngest.

L: You were the baby.

D: Yes.

L: And did they think you were the baby?

D: Yes. [laughter] They tell me I was very spoiled.

L: So how spoiled do you think you were?

D: Um, well, I guess spoiled. [laughter] You know, we were not a wealthy family by any means, but things – It wasn't things. It was, I guess, attention and being cared for and secure, and if you call that spoiled, yes I was.

L: Yeah. Did you get along with your sisters?

D: Sometimes. [laughter]

L: How much older were they than you were?

D: Suzanne is 8 years older and Barb is 6 years older.

L: Okay, so pretty – your lives were pretty separate.

D: Yes, very very.

L: Gotcha. Okay, yeah. Did you ever feel like the two of them were better friends and you were kinda not in that?

D: No, not at all! Uh-uh, not at all. You know, I had a separate relationship with each of them, but it was good. You know, Suzanne was kind of the matriarch, my older sister, and Barb she was kind of the rebel. And then I was spoiled. [laughter] Spoiled, I guess sheltered you would say? Yeah.

L: Gotcha. So tell me about your parents. What did they do?

D: Mom, for a lot of years she worked at a packing house in Dubuque.

L: Really?

D: And my dad worked for a company that – It was a factory, and they made, like, door sashes and doors, and things like that. So he worked there at Farley and Loetscher for years and years, and then they closed down. Then he went to Caradco in Dubuque, which did the same thing.

L: Gotcha. I don't know what a door sash is. What's a door sash?

D: I guess it's the frame around the door.

L: Okay. Got it.

D: And window frames too.

L: Okay, interesting. Okay, got it. So they both were pretty hardworking –

D: Oh yes. They had to be, you know, cause neither job brought in a lot of money. But we didn't know it, you know, we really – St. Columbkille's was on the hill in Dubuque, and I guess there was a lot of money with some people in the parish, but everybody growing up around that area really never thought that way. You know, everybody was friends, and it was a nice way to grow up.

L: That's cool. So did you go to the parish school then?

D: I did, through 9th grade, and then I had a choice of going to Wahlert, the Catholic high school, or Senior. But dad told me that if I wanted to go to Wahlert, he felt Senior had – He was Methodist; he felt that Senior had a great education. So if I wanted to go to Wahlert I'd have to pay for it, and I was working, but I bought clothes, and I went to Senior. [laughter]

L: So tell me what it was like going to a parish school.

D: Very – We were taught by nuns. I think I had a 4th grade teacher who was a lay teacher; the rest were nuns. But again, you just felt very secure, you know, you really didn't have any worries. It was a very strict way to grow up.

L: I was going to ask how strict it was, cause there's kind of that whole, you know –

D: Oh yeah.

L: – stereotype or whatever that's –

D: Very strict. If you didn't answer to mom and dad, you answered to Monsignor Dunn [sp?]. So he was very much a part of your family. Yeah, but you know, it was a very sheltered way to grow up. You didn't have worries.

L: Did you ever get in trouble?

D: Uh, no, not really. Yeah, I was more the quiet one. I think Barb wore them out. [laughter]

L: And then they were so glad when you came along, right?

D: Yeah! Yeah, Suzanne was very studious, you know, and Barb, she was the rebel, and then me, so yeah.

L: So you said you got a – you were working in high school. What was your first job?

D: Babysitting in the neighborhood was first, and then second was working at the Holiday Inn babysitting, and then I also started cleaning rooms. I think I was a sophomore, and there were a lot of young girls working there at the time.

L: So they hired you to babysit the...

D: The people that came in.

L: Really?

D: Yeah, it was different times then, you know. Yeah, so I did that quite a bit.

L: Did you like it?

D: I did! Yes, yeah. And a lot of the girls that were working there were younger, so we had a lot of fun. Yeah. It was hard work!

L: I bet.

D: But it was a lot of fun.

L: So then you moved to cleaning rooms?

D: Yes.

L: And was that harder work?

D: Oh, it was harder work. I don't know, you just didn't – you just expected to do that. I mean, you know, you went out and worked.

L: Do you remember how much money you made at your first job?

D: Oh, I don't. [laughter]

L: Not nearly enough, I'm quite certain. [laughter]

D: Not really. It was enough to save some money to buy some clothes. [laughter]

Other: \$1.95, that's how much I started at.

D: I'm sure it wasn't much, but I did that through senior in high school, and then when I got out of high school I worked for an attorney in Dubuque for four years.

L: Oh really? How did you get that job?

D: Just interviews through the counselor at school. Yeah, and so I worked for him for four years, and then I got married, and we moved away.

L: Okay, gotcha. And is that when you moved to this area, to St. Louis?

D: No, no, we moved to – Bob was in the Army so we moved to Fort Eustace, Virginia, first. And then we were there about nine months, and then we moved to Hartford, Connecticut, and I think we were there about three years. And then we moved back to Des Moines, Iowa. Because I always – I liked the Midwest. I always wanted to be in the Midwest somewhere. Didn't have to be Dubuque. But we moved back to Des Moines, Iowa.

L: Back up for a minute, so you had lived in Des Moines all your life, 21 years –

D: Dubuque.

L: In Dubuque, right. And – sorry – and then you become a wife of someone in the Army, and you're moving all the time. What was that like for you?

D: It was really fun. You know, cause like I said, you hardly got out of the parish and home. It was really fun. When we first moved to Virginia it was all military couples, so we did a lot together. And then when we moved to Connecticut, you know, then it was civilian life, and kind of hard to meet people. So I really got homesick, to the point of being sick, so Bob bought a plane ticket and he said go home and get over it. [laughter] Cause he said your first time away from home is hard.

Other: Did you have kids yet?

D: No. No, so I did go home.

L: So you went to –

D: To Dubuque, m-hm.

L: And did you live with your family?

D: Stayed with my mom, just to visit, you know, I didn't stay there. Just to visit for like a week. Cause I really, I worried about my mom. My dad had passed away a year before I got married, so she kind of became our child, the three sisters' child, you know. So I went home and spent a week at home and then I realized, you know, that I needed to be out by Bob. So I packed, you know, and went back to Connecticut. Yeah, so that took care of it, but it was very needed.

L: So how long had you been in Connecticut at that point?

D: Probably about 3 months.

L: Okay, got it. And then you wound up staying there for about –

D: About three years, yeah. So I worked for the state employment service there, for the area director, and that was quite an education coming from Dubuque. You know, large, Hartford Connecticut, and riots were going on at that time. So – and I took a bus cause we only had one car. But it was a very interesting time.

L: Were you scared? With the riots and all that kind of stuff, did that cause any anxiety for you?

D: Not really, cause the office where I worked, you know, was just really a lot of cool people, caring people. A lot of different characters that made it fun. But no I really wasn't scared at all. Our neighbor came home one night and he had a bullet hole in the trunk of his car, so he drove through some bad scenes, yeah. Cause we lived across the river in East Hartford, Connecticut, and most of the riots were going on in Hartford itself, but downtown area was pretty safe.

So no, it was just a real education, meeting a lot of people, and people of different races, cause in Dubuque when we went to high school we had one young Black boy in our class, and he was really cool. Major personality. But yeah, so that was really the first – and it was just a mix of races that worked in the office. So, getting to know all that. We had Armenians, which I mean, in Dubuque we didn't even have like here in St. Louis, you have the different areas, Italian – we didn't have that in Dubuque. So it was really an education.

L: That's cool. And then from there, where did you say you went?

D: Back to Des Moines, Iowa.

L: Back to Des Moines, okay. Did he get out of the service at that point?

D: Yeah. He was civilian, but he had to be a member of a National Guard or Army Reserve. But he was a military civilian.

L: Okay, got it. And so transitioning back to not-military life, was that an easy adjustment? Or how was that –

D: It was an easy adjustment.

L: Yeah, cause it's what was familiar –

D: Yeah, cause at that time all the guys were coming back from Vietnam, and they were all short term, you know. They were all ready to get out, cause they really had too many numbers in the military at that time. So usually they even cut your time short, and so we were only there seven months. We were supposed to be there over a year. But they were early outs, because they had so many military personnel that they were cutting down the numbers.

L: Was he the same age? And where did you guys meet? Where did you meet your husband?

D: Roller skating rink in Dubuque.

L: Is that right! And he was your age?

D: He's my age. He's – I'll be 73 in November, he'll be 73 in February. So yeah, real close in age.

L: So going to Des Moines, what did you do? So what kind of jobs did you have in Des Moines? And then kids come up here somewhere, where does that happen?

D: Yeah, [laughter] when we left Connecticut I was pregnant with Rob, so I had to fly home, cause I was 8 months pregnant. And then he drove a U-Haul, you know, everything you own in a U-Haul, and we rented a house in Des Moines, Iowa, through a couple that, I think we just answered an ad.

L: That probably worked out pretty well.

D: It did. They were super, super nice, and through them we got to meet their daughter and son-in-law, who are our age. So it was really easy to, kind of, make friends and move into that life. And I was only there a month and I had Rob at the hospital in Des Moines, and then two years later I had Mark. And then we left there, and moved to the Quad Cities.

L: Okay, so back to the other side of the state.

D: Yes, it was all – I think all in total the first 13 years of marriage we moved about 11 times. So I just quit unpacking. I'd unpack what I needed.

L: Yeah, and you probably didn't have a ton of stuff, cause you knew that was coming.

D: No. Yeah, and it was hard, you know, with the two little ones. It was really hard, cause he'd move first, with the job, and then we'd follow up with the movers. Yeah, so that was hard, managing all of that. But through that we met a lot of really nice people. Still stay in touch with a lot of them.

L: So did you stay home with the kids then? Or with the boys? Or how did that –

D: I did for a while, and then I started working for an insurance company in downtown Des Moines. Des Moines is, I think, the second insurance capital of the nation. So, I just wanted to – I always felt like I had to make my own money, even though it was family money. I wanted that independence, I guess you would say. Which in the end was good. [laughter] But I kind of fought for that, you know? So I worked down there, and then when we moved to Davenport I didn't work there, and then we moved to DeWitt and I stayed home.

DeWitt was north of Davenport. I stayed home with the kids then, and I didn't work until – We moved twice in DeWitt. We bought a different house in DeWitt. The first house, well we didn't have much money, and we cashed all our savings bonds, and I think we borrowed some from Bob's mom and dad to buy this old, old house in DeWitt. It was a dive. It was just – people were thrown out of the house cause they didn't pay the contract, so it was a mess. We had these two little ones, Mark was crawling. Yeah, so we were in that house for about a year and we fixed it up some, and then we bought another house in DeWitt. And so I didn't work through that period, and then we left there and moved back to Des Moines.

L: You just, back and forth –

D: Yes. [laughter] Yes, and there, you know, the kids were involved in Cub Scouts. So I did work there, cause Bob then transferred down here to St. Louis. So we had – It was in 2008 I think, when everything crashed, and we had a house in Des Moines, and it wasn't selling. The market was terrible cause that's when interest rates were, what, 13 and 16 percent on a house. So it just wasn't moving. So then the kids and I stayed up there for 6 months, and he was down here. And then we did, finally, the kids and I moved down here. We rented a house, cause our house was still on the market. And finally, a year later – We listed it on April Fools and we signed the contract on April Fools, the next year. Yeah, and so then we moved down here, and we bought a house in Kirkwood. The only thing I knew about St. Louis, cause the boys were small, was Kirkwood had a good strong school district, and that's all I knew about St. Louis, and that was through a friend in DeWitt who was a teacher. So, I just knew I wanted to be somewhere in Kirkwood. And so we rented here, and then finally we bought a little house. Yeah. So that's how we ended up in St. Louis.

L: Gotcha. So how was Kirkwood different than Iowa or your experiences in Dubuque or DeWitt or...

D: When I first moved down here, we rented on a dead end street, and people were very cold. And we joined St. Peter's Parish, you know, cause we always joined a church

as soon as we moved, and I tell people it was the coldest parish I ever moved into. We went to an Italian parish in Des Moines, Iowa. But my kids did go through Confirmation here, but I just didn't find it to be a home parish I wanted to stay in. And then we ended up getting a divorce here, and they were not really supportive of my kids, and I don't know that they did that at that time. Hopefully it's changed, you know, the outreach, as far as families. But so that's how we ended up in Kirkwood.

L: That was probably a pretty hard time.

D: It was, yeah, cause I, you know – I was thinking I should have stayed in Des Moines. [laughter]

L: I was wondering about that! I was wondering if there was any –

D: Almost.

L: It would have been easy to move back to what was familiar, and where it was warm, and you know, that kind of thing.

D: Yeah. I wanted to go back to Dubuque, you know, with the boys, but the boys said, they were – Rob was in middle school, Mark was elementary, and they're like mom, you know, we've moved enough, we don't wanna move again. Yeah, so I said well, if we stay here it's gotta be a partnership, cause I can't do it on my own. And so it ended up to be that. It worked out really well. But I had a lot of family support too, cause like, when I first got a divorce, I couldn't buy a car. My car died, and I couldn't buy a car, cause I was newly divorced. So my sister and brother-in-law had to cosign a loan for me in Washington, Iowa for me to get a car. Yeah, so that was a real education. All those years you worked.

L: I know, right?

D: Yeah, but it didn't count when you went through a loan. Yeah, so I knew the kids and I were gonna be on the street, you know, they'd – [laughter] I didn't react well to a lot of things at that time. If you could go back, you would change the way you handled some things.

Other: Like what girl? Give us an example.

D: Oh, like, my car, this is really dumb, but the headlight went out in my car, and I knew I couldn't take it to a shop to fix because of the money. I didn't think so. And so Rob and I were out there, he's holding the umbrella and it's pouring down rain, and we're trying to change this light. I'm crying, he's freaking cause I'm crying [laughter] and we finally got it done, you know, so yeah. But he's worried cause I'm bawling, and it's raining, so that. You know, I just spazzed over stuff like that that I should have taken calmer, but I didn't. So they'd call up Barb, and they'd say, "Barb, mom's spazzing again, can you talk to her?" [laughter] Yeah.

Like, Rob wanted to play football. I didn't want him to play football, I wanted him to stay in band. Well, he didn't want to stay in band, he wanted to play football. And I said, "No,

I'm not signing the papers," and then Barb calls me. He wants to play football, let the kid play football. Well then he harmed his knee. [laughter]

L: And then you're like, told you so!

D: Yeah! He had to have surgery on his knee. But Barb and Tom came down to help me with him.

Other: But I imagine that made you and your boys extremely close, because of all the things you all had to do together.

D: Oh, it did. It really did, and still very, very close now. Yeah, they become like your best friends. You know, they really do.

L: Do they live here, in the area?

D: Yes. Yeah, cause Mark and Gina moved to... They got married here, and they moved to Muscatine, Iowa. And so –

Other: Iowa...

D: [laughter] I know. Keeps pulling me back. So, because of jobs. And Rob and Jen are still down here. But then my sister's husband, Bob Lang, who was very supportive of the kids and I through these years, he had Parkinson's and Lewy body dementia, and Suzanne was trying to keep him home. So I decided to move up there to give a hand, and my job was able to move with me. I was working for a printing company at the time, and so I went up there. And then Mark and Gina ended up moving back to St. Louis!

L: Really!

D: Yeah. I asked Gina, is it something about your mother-in-law? [laughter] And so I stayed up there for two years, and then Bob ended up going in a nursing home, cause Suzanne and I couldn't handle him. So I stayed up there a while longer and then I moved back down here cause my kids and grandkids and – Yeah. So I wanted to be a part of that.

L: Yeah, but how kind of you to move up to help Bob and help, I mean that's –

D: Well that – They were very kind to us.

L: Yeah, that's really awesome.

D: When I had house issues, you know, Bob would call and he'd say, "What do you need done?" And he'd pack his tools and come down. He'd take time to fix whatever I needed fixed. Yeah, so that's the kind of support we had.

L: No, that's amazing. It really is.

D: Yeah, and when I was home – Cause Bob was in Vietnam. We were engaged at 19, we got married at 21, you know. I'd take care of Suzanne's girls. She had four girls. So

I'd babysit the kids and do stuff with them. So I've got nieces and nephews, you know, that are pretty close too. So, very blessed with family.

L: That's beautiful. So, let's see, where are we in this story? So tell me about, like afterwards, and your boys, and meeting the people who they married and all that kind of stuff. I mean, what was that all?

D: My oldest son got married to Jen. She's from Belleville, Illinois. Big family. And really, really nice family. So they got married at Kirkwood Park. And they went through eight miscarriages, and they finally found that she had a blood disorder, and they would abort the pregnancies. So, but Rob, my son, before Jen had dated a girl Kathy, and they had a baby together and didn't get married. So it ended up that Jen and Rob raised Kayla, my granddaughter, who now has four children.

L: Oh really? Wow!

D: [laughter] So yeah, yeah. And then Mark met Gina in high school, Kirkwood High, and her dad was a teacher of Mark's, and they formed a really good friendship. And it seemed like wherever we lived there was some male figure that stepped in and the kids really admired, and so through that he started dating Gina, and they got married. And I don't think Gina and I were really close until probably in March when I moved out there with Covid, they wanted me to move out and stay with them.

L: Oh, really?

D: Yeah. So that gave us a chance to kind of get a little closer, understand one another. That's a good thing that came out of that.

L: I was going to just say, that's great.

D: Yes. So they have two sons. Who are teenagers now, so it's nice being down here close to them all.

L: Did you – It would have been hard, but did you go on trips or anything like that, as a family, like after you moved to St. Louis, did you guys ever go –

D: We went down to Table Rock Lake two years, which was really fun. We'd stay a week down there, and Bob had a boat, you know, so we got to go out on the lake and all that. So yeah, that was really fun. But most of the trips that we took were back up to Iowa. Yeah, to be around family, and the kids would spend a week with Suzanne and Bob's and then they'd spend a week with Bob's parents, and they'd go up to Minnesota with them. So they totally looked forward to that, and even now I'll take my grandkids – This summer I didn't because of Covid, but I'll take my grandkids up to Dubuque, and they get real excited about going up there. Cause we have a friend who has a family farm, and she has a valley with a creek going through it. They set it up as kind of a party area. So they can go down there and get as filthy as they want and – [laughter] It's freedom! You don't have that. You even have to watch your kids when you put them out in the backyard to play. So it's like freedom. They really like going up there.

L: Yeah, no I could see that. Um, favorite memory. Do you have a favorite memory?

D: Favorite memory, wow. I would say number one is the birth of my kids. [laughter] I guess other favorite memories were all the times we spent as kids with family, and my aunt and uncle had a farm, and they'd get a big Christmas tree from their property, and we'd all go out there for Christmas. And my dad's family were all musical, so they'd all play and we'd all have a sing along, and it sounds kind of hokey, but it really was fun. And that's great memories.

L: Did you play an instrument, or anything like that?

D: No. Barb and Suzanne took piano lessons through the nuns at St. Columbkille's, and neither one of them – Even Suzanne didn't care to practice. So my dad sold the piano. So I still tell them that's why I can't even read music. It's all their fault. Cause they were the brats. And on Sunday's we'd go over to my grandma and grandpas, my dad's – My mom's grandma, well my mom's mom, passed away when she lived at home with us, and I was 5 when she passed away. Totally Irish Catholic. She had really long hair, and she'd braid it and put it around the top of her head. Yeah. But through her we had holy water fonts in each bedroom, we had the braided, what are they, leaves from church – palms. They'd be blessed and we had those.

Other: All over the house, yes.

D: Yeah. The sick call set in case somebody died in the house, so the Priest would have everything right there. This is how we grew up. Easter we'd make every – a week of Mass.

Other: You had the cross with the holy water bottle in it.

D: Yes. Yeah at that time, like Suzanne and Bob got married, and they were given a sick call crucifix for their wedding present. Very, very Catholic.

Other: Always. Yeah, any time you had a Catholic wedding, we had one too.

D: Yeah. So on Sundays we'd go over to grandma and grandpas, and he made all kinds of wood things. He made wooden wagons with wooden wheels. Yeah, so he made it for all the grandkids. And on Curtis Street, across the street, we had – Dad would call them the old maids, cause they never married and I guess old maids was just a general term then. They were crabby women. [laughter] Like, if a ball would go in their yard they'd come out and grab it, and they wouldn't give the ball back to the kids. Yeah. But we'd ride – We lived at the top of the hill, so we'd ride these wagons down the hills, and it made an awful racket with the wooden wheels. Yeah, so we were riding down their side of the street cause it was more even, and they came out and told us to take them back and get out of their side of the street. So my dad went out and talked to them, and they told us, you ride those wagons. [laughter] But they liked my dad, cause he would go over and help them with different things and stuff like that. So they liked dad, so they

didn't mess with him, cause he was nice to them. Yeah. So that was part of growing up. But Sundays at grandma and grandpas was really fun. The adults would play euchre.

L: Okay, I don't know euchre.

D: Oh, big Dubuque game, card game.

L; Okay, is it – card game.

D: Yeah. Yeah, and you always felt special when you finally got to play at the big table with the adults.

L: Yeah, you were in.

D: Yes, yes. And we would go over to my grandpa – Cause we, you know, grew up Catholic, so we didn't study out of the Bible, we studied Catechism. And my grandpa was Methodist as my dad was. So when we would go over there Sundays, Sunday was our day with grandma and grandpa, he'd have the Bible on his lap. And then when we got there, you know, he'd fold up his Bible, and then he'd get out the checkerboard, and we'd play Checkers with him, and have Bubble Up and candy corn, you know. That was big stuff, cause we didn't have soda at home. And, so yeah it was a great way – Like I said it was very secure way to grow up.

L: So are you more like your mom or your dad?

D: My mom.

L: Yeah?

D: M-hm.

L: In what way?

D: She was, mom was just, she was a lot of fun. You know, the grandkids loved her, just cause she was fun. And I'll never forget when we lived in DeWitt mom came down. Suzanne brought mom down, and that's when the polyester pantsuits were in style, and so we went down to a park at Scott County park, and they had one of those slides that went like this, and my mom thought that looked like fun so she got up there, and with the polyester she went down that slide like that. [laughter] Boom, right in the ground, and Suzanne and I were dying! [laughter] Kids were dying, and mom's like, you know, you don't even know if I'm hurt. [laughter] And she wasn't, but that's what the kids remember about her. She tried to teach Rob – When we lived in DeWitt she tried to teach him how to ride a bike, and she ended up falling in the rose bushes. You know, but she was just fun. She was quiet. She was fun. Very gentle, you know. If you had a bad day at school, you'd go home, and she'd say, "Oh, just lay here in my lap," and she'd rub your head. You know, the world got better. And that was my mom.

L: Yeah. Tell me about your dad then.

D: Dad was quiet. He was working. He worked at Farley and Loetscher or Caradco, and then he also had a landscaping business on the side, and so he was gone a lot working. But he ended up having a nervous breakdown in his four – no, I think he was close to 50 when Farley and Loetscher shut down. The man had to make a living, you know. So he couldn't handle that. So he ended up in the Dubuque sanitarium. Which is like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". Yeah, truly. So I was I think last year of high school when that happened.

L: Was that scary for you?

D: Very scary. Cause you'd go in to visit him, you could visit him I think once a week. Mom could go more often, but the kids couldn't go with her, and, you know, he'd look at you and would not even acknowledge he knew you. Yeah, so that was very, very odd, you know. But he came through that, came home, and –

L: How long was he in there?

D: That I can't tell you. How long he was in there.

L: Was it like a year? Or long – many years, or –

D: Oh no. I would say maybe three months? Yeah, but at that time, you know, there was no union, any income incoming, and he had a heart attack when he was in his late 30s. And it was Barb, Suzanne, and mom that got us through that. Barb was like 8th grade, she started working at a convent in the kitchen for the nuns, and Suzanne worked at Kroger. She was in high school, checking, and mom, she worked at a pharmacy, clerking, and so it was their money coming home, at that young age, that kept our family –

L: Again that's a really scary time, you know?

D: Yeah! But I was clueless, you know? I was younger and I just, it was part of life, you know. So their money came home. Even Barb in 8th grade, what she made came home.

L: And now you couldn't work, you know what I mean? It's like –

D: No, no. Yeah, so there are times you remember that weren't the best. But when dad came home and came out of that, he did much better. He was calmer. I think cause he was raised through the Great Depression times, and my grandma was an orphan. She came through on the orphan trains from New York. Yeah, that was his mom. So evidently, I don't know a whole lot of history on that, my sisters know more, but evidently when the orphan train kids would come through, they'd stop at all these little farm towns and the farmers would be there and pick kids that they wanted to take, and the other kids would get back on the train and keep moving. I mean, how awful. So, I mean, I'm sure that makes you very tough. So when they raised – When grandma and grandpa raised the kids, they had 6 kids –

L: So was she adopted by somebody in Iowa? Is that –

D: Not adopted. She was not adopted. She was taken home by a family that was a farm family, and they were Catholic. And she said that she was treated like unpaid labor. But when you see pictures of her, she's always dressed so pretty and her hair is pretty. So I don't know, but she had a lot of hard feelings against Catholics. And then my dad ended up marrying my mom, who was Catholic.

L: Interesting.

D: Yeah, yeah. And mom was always very respectful of her, and you know, joined in all the family stuff. They never had a close relationship, my mom and my grandma, but later years after my dad had passed away and – Mom always told us, you know, you respect her as your dad's mother. And so that, you had no doubt. And she wasn't warm, by any means. You know, you never got hugs or anything. My other grandma I can remember from five being so warm. But she wasn't, and probably life had a way of making her that way.

L: Well I wonder if they gave her nice things, but didn't – withheld affection and – you know that – and that's why she felt like it was slave labor, you know what I mean?

Other: - always said nice things, when she was in public, but they were mean to her when she was –

D: Yeah, that's what's so sad, you know, because when she passes away that history passes away. Yeah, cause she was never – Brian, my nephew, found out she was never legally adopted by this family. And Brian did run down her mother's name in New York, and I don't know how far he got with that. And they think they may possibly have a father's name? But they're not sure. So he's doing all the genealogy on all the families. Yeah, my grandfather on my mom's side, he passed away young, and they – I guess he was a real Irish drunk. Yeah. And nobody really knew where he was buried, but my nephew Brian found out he's buried in a cemetery in Dubuque.

L: Really?

D: Yeah, yeah. So he's finding out a lot, doing that genealogy stuff, yeah. But no, you know, grandma was not a warm person, but yet the family was all held together, cause we'd spend Sundays over there.

L: So, to wrap up, how do you want to be remembered?

D: Oh, just giving a whole lot of love to my kids and grandkids. I have a friend whose brother is passing away, and this is just to me as a life lesson. He inherited a lot from his dad, like millions, and he – that's his drive, you know, to get more and more and more, and Joann told me this week that he is not going to make it and he went home with hospice care, and he's my age, but he has no connection with his kids. You know, so there's your life lessons, you know? It's pretty cold to die with all this money but, you know, no one really caring. So that's what's important is family. Family and friends.

L: Sometimes they're the same.

D: Yes!

L: Sometimes your friends become family and –

D: Yes. A lot of that has happened in this building. Yeah.

L: That's pretty special.

D: It is. It is. So I would say I'm very blessed. You know, learned a lot through life as everybody does, but very blessed with what I have.

L: That's awesome. Well thank you Diane.

D: You're welcome.