

Angeline Fleming

The Real Rosie the Riveter Project

Interview 32

Interview Conducted by

Anne De Mare and Kirsten Kelly

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Interview: Angeline Fleming

Interviewers: Anne De Mare and Kirsten Kelly

Date: July 12, 2010

Place: Detroit, MI

Fleming: Okay, my name is Angeline Featherstone Fleming. I was born in Indianola, Mississippi, that's the Delta Mississippi. Twelfth month, December the 11th 1919. I grew up in Indianola, went to school in Indianola, to the 11th, threw the 11th grade. They didn't have 12th grade then so I was able to go to Little Rock, Arkansas, that's where I finished high schools and then I came back in home and the government gave us a chances to become teachers. So they had a group of ladies and sent us to Mount By, Mississippi, which is an all black town. There we took this course, which as about a nine-month course. And after we finished this course, we were appointed to teach. We had an Associates degree and we were appointed different schools in order to teach. So I went to Sunflower, Mississippi that was maybe 12 miles from my home and that's where I taught for a year. After that my brothers had come to Detroit, one at a time, all the brothers came. He sent for my second oldest brother. When he got there, he got him a job at General Motors and then he sent for my third oldest

brother. And then they sent for me. And that's that's the part of Mississippi that I love, is there anything else you'd want to know?

De Mare: Oh yea, there's a lot else I'd like to know. Uh can you talk a little bit about your childhood in Mississippi and tell me how many were in the family and what life was like for you as a child down there?

Fleming: Well, we were poor but we were proud family. We just didn't take anything. My mother and father taught us to be—we didn't have anything—they taught us to be proud. Let us know that we could pretend to be somebody if we wanted anybody. And we were always respected, my father, my mother. We had this thing, you know down in Mississippi, segregation. Part of the town was meant for black people and the other part was for white. So the people in Mississippi, I mean the whites, they always respected my mother and my father. And she did, my mother did, a—

De Mare: She said, "Give some names."

Fleming: Names of who?

Family Member: Your mother's names and stuff. Tell them, Nathan, tell them names.

Fleming: Oh...

Kelly: You don't have to but it's a good idea.

Fleming: I don't mind. They've done passed now haven't they?

Family Member: In the future just give names.

Fleming: Oh okay. My mother was named was Maily. My father was named James, and there was 11 of us...11 (chuckles).

De Mares: What did your father do for a living?

Fleming: Some of everything. Leave home and go to Kentucky and work in the coal mine and then, excuse me (wipes eyes) and then from there he worked on the railroad in Missouri and uh then he came back home. And we had an oil build then and an oil build is a place where they separate the cotton. Well, in Mississippi where we lived in the Delta, the cotton was cane. So uh, this oil build is where they

separate the seeds from the cotton and he was the farmer there. He kept the ballers gone. So uh-

04:52:23-----

De Mare: So your father worked in all these different jobs. There were 11 of you kids-

Fleming: We were poor now. We scuffled but we always—we had a cow, where we got our milk from. My father always got two pigs and raised them up to hogs. They'd be up to 300 pounds and people would come around and watch them when it was time to kill them, which was in October. And we had chickens so that kept us with food.

De Mare: What was your life like as a child. I know you went to school but what was your social life like as a child? Do you remember?

Fleming: um there were so many of us so we didn't need to have no company or anything to have—we would have at night when we were in our different rooms in the beds so forth and so on. We would call out the cities, the boys against the girls. They'd call out the city and we would have to

name the state. And things like that, that's the way we would do. We'd call out different railroads. L and E and M and O, Missouri and Ohio, things like that. And then, let's see, we had a playground, a park they call it here, but we had a playground then but we's as we'd go out there, there's this guy: James, fixed us a tennis court. Shoot- I think then the tennis rackets coast 35 cents. We were, we weren't even able to buy a 35-cent racket. He would let us play with-he'd lend us rackets. And then we'd have a baseball, we'd play baseball in the evening. Our main thing were skates. Everybody got skates, roller skates, four-wheel roller skates for Christmas. And then in the evening, we'd roller skate. My mother took in washing so we had to do so many clothes and then we could go out and play. So we-- that's what taught me to iron in a hurry, because I would all mine and then after doing we could go out and play at the park, which was about half a block from our home.

07:40:09-----

De Mare: Now, did you pick cotton? Can you talk about picking cotton?

Fleming: Yea.

De Mare: Can you tell us what that was like?

Fleming: Well, it is hard work, uh I can tell you that. We'd pick cotton—all of our school would start in September and we would pick cotton up until October. We'd pick cotton for a whole month and that month we would get out of school closing. Our, you know, they'd close the school.

De Mare: So the money you earned picking cotton would pay for your school clothes for the year?

Fleming: Right. Right.

De Mare: And did you--you mentioned, I'm going to go to something that you said earlier, that they only had school up to 11th grade and you had to travel to Little Rock, Arkansas—

Fleming: No, I went there. I had a cousin who lived there and she took me in. That's how I got a chance to finish high school.

De Mare: Ok.

Fleming: And then after I finished high school, that's when the government stepped in and selected so many of us that had finished high school to go take this course. Teacher's course, teacher's training course. And then that's when I became a teacher, and I taught school for one semester, one year and that's when my brother sent for me to come to Detroit.

De Mare: Can you talk a little bit about what the schools were like down in that area, in Mississippi during that time and why you were recruited by the government to become, to become school teachers.

Fleming: Well, the schools—there were black schools and there were white schools. The—the weren't integrated the way they are now. The blacks went to the black schools and whites went to the white schools. And uh, that's it.

De Mare: And you were recruited to become a teacher in the black schools.

Fleming: Right.

De Mare: ...by the government?

Fleming: After I had finished high school, the government recruited so many of us out of the state, you know some of us from Sunflower County, they'd choose- you know where I lived, and different other counties. And we all went to a Moboma, Mississippi, which was a black. At that time it was an all black town but it's not there anymore.

10:23:08-----

De Mare: Now, when your brother came to Detroit, he got a job at General Motors and uh he sent for your other brothers and then for you-

Fleming: Um uh. And my other brother came and he got a job at General Motors. Both of them worked over there on the boulevard for so many years until they retired.

De Mare: So they worked for General Motors from then all the way through.

Fleming: Um uh...

De Mare: Wow.

Fleming: Two of my brothers. My older brother worked in the factory.

De Mare: Now, uh what was it like, can you talk about the experience as a young girl, coming from MS moving up here to Detroit and what that was like?

Fleming: Well, it was the happiest moments because I didn't have you know coming from the south, coming to the city, it was different.

De Mare: in what ways?

Fleming: Well, let's see how many different ways. It was just different, you know just like like, you know not used to streetcars and things like that. You'd come to the city, and you'd have to ride streetcars to work. At that time there were streetcars instead of busses, here in Detroit. So I came to Detroit, let's see now, after I got here—I mean I got a job teaching train—I mean this teacher's training, I got a job doing the riveting. I I I got a quite a few friends, some of them from Mississippi.

Family Member: Well, she's trying to tell these people in a documentary what it was like for you to live a life like that. You know the experience of—people don't going through all that now. And what you went through were hard times. Let it hang out ma. I'm through. I'll shut up now.

Fleming: Well, at one time we lived in a little two-room house, which was living room, dining room, kitchen, no living room, dining room, bedroom and then there was a kitchen. Now we had uh two double beds and a cot in this living room, supposed to be a front room we called it. And then we had a bedroom—a single—double bed in the kitchen along with the stove and everything and that's how we lived. There wasn't I had a room by myself of this, that, nothing. We all three of us slept in a bed, that's the way we lived. We were poor. We didn't have anything. We would uh, they would come by and tell my mother that out on the farms that they had—well they had turnips you know greens they would tell her that they were giving them to the poor people. And my brothers, my mother would send them out and they would get bags of turnips digging in the ground. Now, this was in December. This was in the cold weather. They would bring the turnips in and we would eat all of them.

And then as I said, we had hogs. We had chickens and we had cow so it kept us with food. And then at one time the government gave, what would I want to say? Gave food. You go up to a place in town, we called it uptown in Enola and they would give us food. Families like my mother and my father and they would give us food, you know. So you know, my father went up and the lady was handing him one of these, one of that, one of another. And one of the ladies said, "James and Maily have a big family so give them more." So they gave my father more food. They always looked out for our family, the white people did.

15:23:22-----

De Mare: Can you talk about how you got the job and how you were trained for the job?

Fleming: Well they were hiring at the—hold on a minute—

De Mare: Sure.

Fleming: I got to check—Murray Body. That's all clay on clay and Russell. They were teaching, they were hiring people to teach them how to rivet. So one of the guys that

I I—that lived in the house with my brother. This was a boarding house like—he took me over to Murray Body and I got hired. And that's how I got started. And you know they told me how to rivet all the all the fundamentals of riveting.

De Mare: Now for someone who doesn't understand what riveting is, can you explain what you did? Like physically what you would do?

Fleming: Oh okay. They taught us to make wings for the B-29. That's what we were doing, making wings for them. And he- and they told us that we have this riveting gun, which was a nail gun. Then you had a bucket on the back and you'd rivet these wings, parts of the wings together. And uh that's that's the training we had. We got through all the fundamentals of riveting and then Ford Motors come and hired us out in Highland Park. And that's when we started working out there.

De Mare: At the Ford Motor Company in Highland Park and they were making the B-29 Bombers?

Fleming: Um uh b-29 wings for the bombers.

De Mare: Now, do you remember, can you tell us on camera how much you were paid when you started working there?

Fleming: I think we were paid about \$1.45 an hour, which was big money to me. *Laughs.*

De Mare: And do you remember what it felt like as a young woman to earn that kind of big money?

Fleming: Well, you know it gave me independence you know. All of us, the kids, there were four kids of us...let's see my older brother, who was married, my other two brothers and myself. And we would send money home to my mother and father you know to help with the other kids under us. And uh, it I would have me a little bank account you know. I would send so much home and then so much I would put away.

De Mare: And what kinds of things would you buy for yourself with that money?

Fleming: Well, that coat that you saw...that was one of them at Anne's Furs in Enola used—I mean, Detroit, used to be Anne's furs and clothes.

18:33:15-----

De Mare: You've obviously gone through, you've been educated and you've learned how to be a teacher and you had done that for a year and you find yourself here and you're doing this very difficult work, very physical work and you're earning you're earning a very good living. Could you talk about, like the way you talked about your childhood and what you used to do as a child, could you talk about what your day-to-day life was like when you were living here with your brothers and you were working and earning that kid of money?

Fleming: Well, what was my life like?

De Mare: Think about it...you can take a moment to think about it.

Fleming: Well, I would go to work, come back home. On the weekends, we would go to uh different...let's see now, we'd go to different clubs. At that time in Detroit, you could go to different...Sam's, Sunny Wilson's, the Cellar Door, the 3-6's were all different clubs you could go to. And on

Friday night and Saturday night my sister-in-law and my brother would take me with them to different clubs, you know. Back then the 3-6's were all different clubs, plus back then it was a bowling alley. Then you could go bowling and then on Sunday's I found me a church that I liked and I joined church and Sunday morning. I mean, Sunday 11 o'clock I would always go to church. I still go to church.

De Mare: Were you dating anyone? Was your social life—what was your social life like?

Fleming: Well my social life was pretty good. At first I didn't have a social life when I first got here because I was working at Murray Body's learning how to rivet so I didn't have time for no guys of any kind. But when I went to Ford Motor Company that's when I started and I met my husband there.

De Mare: And what did your husband do there?

Fleming: he was a uh he was uh a he would drive...

Family Member: High loads?

Fleming: High loads, he would deliver different pieces of material on the high loads. He was the high load driver.

De Mare: Can you talk little bit about working at the Ford Motor Company? Was the work force integrated or segregated when you worked there? Did you work with-

Fleming: Oh it was integrated when when when we were there well you know, it got integrate by the time I came to Detroit.

De Mare: And what was that like for you as a young woman?

Fleming: Well, it wasn't nothing...

De Mare: Well, coming from the Deep South it was a change.

Fleming: Yea, you're right. Right, the black and the whites worked on these wings, these elevators to set these wings up and then the elevator would rise up as you rivet. You go on until you go to the to and then would take it off, the rivet off. It was beautiful- different. I had some friends that I had gotten so I had met friends while I was at the Ford Motor Company. And uh most times I would go out with

my sister and brother-in-law. A lot of times just my sister-in-law and I would go out.

Kelly: What was the clubs um, what were the clubs—you were talk about the clubs and this kind of social-life. Was there, you can still answer to her but were the clubs like? Was there dancing?

Fleming: Yea...

Kelly: What was the music like?

Fleming: Dancing, you could, you know you'd dance and they had drinks you know. You'd go down to the table and sit down and drink and dance and so on and so on so you know...just some nights just a nice place to be and enjoy yourself.

De Mare: Were you aware—can you talk a little bit about the war and how you felt about the war and aware you were about the war?

Fleming: Well you know, they called us because they caught us with our pants down, the Japanese did. We didn't have—

they had destroyed just about all of uh our planes, boats, you know ships and so forth and so on. Then that's why we had to uh make up for that, that's why were building these B-29, you know wing- So many factories were making, do different parts you know when they get through it, it will be the whole plane. So we did the wings.

23:33:20-----

De Mare: And did you feel like you were a part of the effort for the war? Did you feel connected to the war that was going on or did you feel distant, you know?

Fleming: Well, I felt like we were connected. We were working, trying to restore what they had destroyed so I felt like we were connected with the war.

De Mare: Did you know anyone who was fighting, did you know anyone in the service?

Fleming: Well after I got here for a while both of my brothers, they were sent to the service. One went to uh Australia and the other one to Belgium. Two different countries. So I would write them and keep them informed

about what was going on in Detroit, so forth and so on. I I
I felt I was a part of it.

De Mare: You were. You were.

Kelly: You...I remember on the phone that you talked about
you were one of the fastest riveters.

Fleming: Oh yea.

Kelly: Can you talk about that? Tell Anne.

Fleming: Well you know we had uh there were sections. You
know, there was wing B and then it would go smaller and
smaller. That would be about three, I think three or four
of us on uh on this wing. Some of us had, you know we would
change around. Maybe this time I would do the big part of
it and the next time I would do the second and then the
third, the small end, the small rivet. And all the folk, I
don't know, I guess I always wanted to be the best so me
and my partner, we would start riveting and we would you
know put the rivets in, shoot it with the air gun, like
that, that's the way we would do it. And we would go so
far until they the others were down there so we couldn't

use the elevators. So I would climb up. Put my one of my knees on the wing and the other one on the balance of the elevator and then we would go on up and we would finish we would go in the restroom and relax until the others get through. And when they get through they would take the wing down and put fresh wing up and then we'd start all over again. But I was always—for some reason, I always wanted to be the best and then the white bosses and everything would come around and they would watch me rivet. I thought I was somebody. So one of them asked me, "Where did you learn to rivet from?" And I told him that I took the training in Murray Body's.

De Mare: Is there any kind of anecdote or uh—

Kelly: A memory—

De Mare: Or a memory that you have, a specific memory that you have about something that happened while you were working?

Family Member: I remember you's was talking about that...

Fleming: Well this was one of the people that worked with us. She uh, her husband was in service and she, uh, I was trying to think of her name but I can't think of it now. But in anyway she stopped eating and uh eventually her intestines closed down on her and eventually she died from that, but I mean, that's something...

De Mare: We're curious to see the things that people went through and all the different kinds of things people went through-

Fleming: Oh yea, that's true.

De Mare: and um, you know it was such a drastic time in so many ways.

Fleming: Yea, it was a drastic time now all right. And we- everybody was working. Everybody who thought they wanted a job or two jobs. They worked them in order to try and get the United States back on foot.

Kelly: Was there- this was a time of a lot of rationing and and they had ration stamps, is that right?

De Mare: Can you talk about that a little bit?

Fleming: Right. Well, when we would, we were during that time they did ration. They rationed gas, you could get so many gallons a month. They rationed your whisky. You only got one filter, a quarter, whatever you called it because I didn't drink or nothing, the kind so the lady, my land lady, I would stand in line with her to get her an extra one bottle. And then on Thursdays was we could get meat. Maybe if you were lucky you could get a stake or some pork chops like that. Otherwise, spam. Spam was the name of the game...you ate spam all the rest of the time, lunchmeat and so on and so on. But then if you were lucky and you knew the the butcher, you could go from under the counter and he would give you extra meat, uh um.

29:29:16-----

De Mare: Can you talk a little bit about, did you wear pants to work and what that was like for you. You know what kind of clothing you wore?

Fleming: Oh we wore pants to work. That's what we'd work in, pants you know because you know up on those elevators,

if we wore a dress that wouldn't be so good. So uh, so we wore pants to work.

Kelly: Was it the first time you wore pants?

Fleming: Really and truly because when I was in the South we didn't wear pants. Coming up we didn't wear pants we wore dresses. And we had a time trying to keep them from being torn off playing, running and playing.

Kelly: And what was it, what did you feel about, what else did you wear as a Rosie the Riveter?

De Mare: Did you have a uniform that you wore as a Rosie the Riveter or was it just slacks?

Fleming: Just slacks. We didn't have to wear anything else.

De Mare: Did you wear anything over your hair on your head? Do you remember?

Fleming: We had to have glasses, the goggles, I know we had to have goggles, but I'm trying to remember—I don't think we wore nothing on our heads, otherwise because uh it

wasn't that skinny thing would jump off and uh hit you in the face or nothing of the kind because you know you were just putting these rivets in the wholes and shooting them with the gun, you know. And your bucker back there catching them.

De Mare: So you had to have a really close relationship with your bucker?

Fleming: You know we gave signs. If the other, if she didn't get it straight she would hit hit in the back, one or two times...

De Mare: Can you, can you really explain that because you couldn't see each other so can you tell me how that worked? You know, can you tell me how that would work and the signals that you gave.

Fleming: well we knew the signals...we knew if she would tap one time she wanted me to hit the rivet again so she could straighten it out. Sometimes it would bend over you know, the rivet would. I guess it was made out of aluminum.

De Mare: They were.

Fleming: Uh um. And then sometimes she would miss it and then I had to take a drill, and drill that rivet out and put another one in.

De Mare: So when you were working at Ford Motor was there a labor union and did you join the union? Can you talk about what that was like?

Fleming: Well there were always unions here in Detroit. So uh we had labor unions but so far the labors and you know the people—about this being a war and everybody was together trying to get this thing over with, we didn't have any problems. We didn't have no problem with the union or the labors.

De Mare: So you—so there was no tension between them, between the management and the unions?

Fleming: No, right, that's true.

De Mare: Now um did you work, you said the workforce was integrated, black and white, you worked together. What about men and women? Did you work together in the plant?

Fleming: What do you mean, men and women?

De Mare: I mean, your bucker was another woman, right, now...

Fleming: Oh yea, there were bucker men and there were men riveters.

De Mare: But the men and women worked together? You you—or they only worked—you know what I'm asking? You know, would there be a male bucker and a female riveter at times or were they separated?

Fleming: Uh it looked like, as far as I can remember, it looked like, just like I had a black bucker, this guy would be riveter, he had a white bucker but still you know what I'm talking about, we were there together. But you know there were...

De Mare: Were there any supervisors who were women or supervisors that were black or was the supervising—I'm just trying to get a picture of what was going on inside the plant.

Fleming: As I can remember, I don't remember too many black supervisors as far as I can remember.

Kelly: Were there any women? Were all the women on crews or were all the women supervisors at all? Or was it all men?

Fleming: As far as—in my section, they were men. Now this is a whole factory. You know a big factory. Now everybody had their sections and what was going on in other sections, I didn't know nothing about, you know. But as far as my section they were men.

De Mare: Now um the plant at that point worked 24 hours a day. They worked three shifts usually. Was that the same at Ford as well? Did you work—at which shift did you work?

Fleming: I worked afternoons and som—and let's see, when I first started I worked afternoons and I think I worked afternoons all the while, all through until I left. You know, I got married. When I got married, I got married to a guy who was working in the Ford factory. And then they were going to send him, he either had to go to un the arm—go to war or else he would have to be shipped out to California

and build ships. So he decided, he and I decided that maybe he would build ships so we left for and moved out to Richmond, California.

De Mare: And you worked in the shipyards in Richmond, California?

Fleming: No. I worked for the Navy Supply Depot.

Kelly: Can you talk about—

Fleming: The foot, the foot of Oakland. I mean the foot of Oakland I mean, I got a job there.

De Mare: What did you do there?

Fleming: I was a storekeeper. We would uh they would take these invoices and when these ships, different ships, different section of the wood needed something this warehouse carried all the—all the supplies for ships. We had the elbows you know the elbows or these things. You'd get these invoices and we had to fill these invoices and the main time the guys who were in the Navy, they would help us fill these invoices because of these things were

bigger than this table you know, different things they had to have...these, whatcha you call them? Elbows...

De Mare: Like the parts for--

Fleming: Th-timber, different things like that.

De Mare: And who exactly did you work for? Was it the government or was it a private company?

Fleming: It was the government.

De Mare: It was the government. And what was your husband doing there?

Fleming: He was in the shipyards. He worked in the shipyard in Richmond.

De Mare: And what was he doing?

Fleming: And I was in Oakland as a storekeeper for the Navy, for the United States Navy.

De Mare: So you stayed in—you stayed working in the war effort through the war?

Fleming: We stayed there until, I stayed there for a year and then the war was over in a year's time. Then I came, we came back to Detroit.

37:40:13-----

De Mare: Did you like it in California? What was the experience like out there?

Fleming: They were pretty. Tell it like it is...

De Mare: Yea, tell it.

Fleming: They were pretty.

Family Member: Tell them how you passed the test and you didn't get the job. You were the best typist. Tell them it all—

De Mare: Yea, no I want to hear the story.

Family Member: That's what they want to hear.

Family Member: Remember how you got, how you passed the typing test. Remember how you told me you typed real well and you passed the typing and you didn't get you the job. Remember?

Fleming: I didn't type.

Family Member: What did you do? You took a test.

Fleming: Yea, hun, and got a 100 on the test.

Family Member: Tell 'em.

De Mare: What was the test for? Do you remember?

Fleming: Different jobs there. The only reason they said I didn't get it was because I couldn't type. I didn't know how to type. Well, that was their excuse anyway, you know. So I went from there—I was trying to get a job there in Richmond, California so I couldn't that job. So they sent me—gave me this job at the Navy Supply Depot in Oakland, California and that's where I worked for that year.

Kelly: Why do you think you didn't get that job?

Fleming: Um?

Kelly: Why do you think you didn't get that job really?

Fleming: Because I was black. They've got prejudices out there now.

Kelly: So you experience more of that out there in California than you did in Detroit?

Fleming: Right, right.

Kelly: Interesting...so when you were out there you wanted to come back to Detroit because the experience out there wasn't so great? Is that...

Fleming: I didn't...that's why I came back to Detroit because they weren't nice out there in California as far as I was concerned. So much difference in here than out there. At that time now, that was in the '40s.

Kelly: Do you remember—so you were out in Richmond when the war was over, right? Do you remember the day, like where were you and what happened and how you found out the war was over?

Fleming: Evidently this must have the weekend or close to the weekend or something the time because I think I was at home—you know out there at home when they said—well you know when they dropped that bomb. It wasn't too long before the war was over. That was the last part of the war. So they dropped that bomb and the war was over then.

De Mare: What was it like, how did you feel about that? What was it like? Was there—

Fleming: Well you know there was shouting and hollarin' and celebrating and so forth and so on. I was glad too it was over.

De Mare: And then—what what—how did your life change when the war was over? Can you talk about that because you came back to Detroit, I was married now, remember and I got pregnant then in California so I came back to Detroit. My husband was working at uh he was a delivery guy living

downtown. Plus he was still got a job back in the factory so uh life and everything settled down and everything and life was beautiful...end up with five babies.

De Mare: As you look back, if you think about the rest of your life after you were a Rosie, when you were a young mother, how do you think being a Rosie effected you? Do you think it changed you in any way?

Fleming: Well, I can't say it changed me because I always worked you know, picking cotton, chopping cotton when I was in Mississippi, you know. But it gave—made me independent. You know I had my own money and everything and kind until I got married really. The money was between the both of us you know.

De Mare: Did it change the way you thought about what women can do?

Fleming: I guess everybody had a chance to uh, you know before the war, things were tight. You know, we had this this...rough times. Then when the war came everybody was able to uh work. They gave 'em a chance to buy homes and automobiles and everything of the kind. So uh the really

and truly the war helped people. Helped everybody. And the people here in the South moved north where they were getting jobs you know, working at Ford Highland Park and Ford *inaudible* Plants you know and everything of the kind. And everybody was living good, but then after the war was over and everything of the kind they I guess they were still doing pretty good with themselves. They still had jobs, most of them did.

De Mare: Now your brother stayed working for the Ford Motor Company after the war?

Fleming: My brother worked for—my older brother worked for Crystler. I'm the one who worked for Ford.

De Mare: Ok.

Fleming: My other two brothers worked for General Motors up here on the boulevard. One was the cook and the other one was—I think both of them were cooks then in the cafeteria. And they stayed there until they retired. After they came back from service, they went back on their jobs, they saved them their jobs. That's the way they did, you know. If you worked in a place and left and went to

service, when you came back your job was waiting on you. So that's the way that was.

44:14:20-----

Kelly: Did you know any Rosies or any friends of yours who were Rosies did then—you know after the war all the men came back and a lot of the women like left or were told there wasn't any more work because they had to give the work to the men—

Fleming: Right.

Kelly: Was that happening?

Fleming: I don't know about that because when I came back, I was pregnant; I had a husband so he did the working and did the thing staying at home taking care of the kids as I started having kids. But uh I imagine uh they laid off after the war was over, didn't have to make no wings for B-29s or nothing of the kind and so on and so on. They laid the la—the women off. The—If some of the women still worked at the Ford in uh Rouge but uh the majority I guess were in

Highland Park and laid them off just for men now, you know, the jobs they had before the war started.

De Mare: Do you—after you raised your family did you ever go back to work or no?

Fleming: Oh yea.

De Mare: Can you talk about what you did after that?

Fleming: Well after I raised my—after my family come up I went to work uh laundry wasn't it? Um uh I worked in the laundry. I started cleaning uniforms, I worked—I helped drying cleaning the uniforms and pressing. And then after I left there I went as a housekeeper for the Heart Hospital for so long and after I worked there I was 65 years old. It was time for me to retire. And I retired. Kids were all up, some of them were married, some of them grown and everything, yea most of 'em. So that's about my life.

De Mare: Is that about your life? That's a life!

Kelly: Incredible! Now can you tell us before we wrap up, can you tell the story about your 90th birthday and how Detroit honored you?

Fleming: Well, my daughters gave me a birthday party and they still talk about that birthday party. It was so beautiful. I had a different one—it was integrated. Had a white doctor and I had...*laughs*

Family Member: *laughs*

Fleming: What's wrong? ...What's wrong?

Family Member: We thought there was a rattlesnake.

Fleming: Anyway, each one of my brothers and sisters sent me \$90 for birthday. In fact my sister send me \$125 but they can afford it.

De Mare: And what—and what did the—can you tell the story about the Proclamation from the City of Detroit? Because that happened on your 90th birthday, right?

Fleming: Right.

De Mare: Can you tell us—

Fleming: Is this when we went to the City County Building? We went to the City County Building. The first time I had been in there—I mean not the building but up where the...council, council people were. And I had a chance to meet all the council people. You know all the council people. They were very nice and everything.

De Mare: What did they do for you while you were there?

Fleming: Oh they had me to come up with my children and friends and so forth and so on and they honored me with uh—

Family Member: Resolution.

Fleming: Resolution. She read it off and everything—Brenda, Councilwoman Brenda Jones and she read it off to everybody and then she passed it on to me, which was very nice.

Kelly: And that was for your 90th birthday?

Fleming: My 90th birthday.

De Mare: And they honored you being 90 and for being a Rosie?

Fleming: Both.

De Mare: Both. Uh uh, she says I wasn't Rosie the Riveter I was Angeline the Riveter. Well...

The End.