

TRANSCRIPTION OF DOROTHY FISHER INTERVIEW – September 2008

... I realized why he had done it. Because he was devoted to his mother and he supported her. And he felt the connection. It is lovely. He was wonderful to me. I had to have a wisdom tooth pulled and I just told him I wouldn't be in the next day. Because there wasn't a really personal reaction between the two of us. I was his secretary. And I was thrilled because I had read the books before. I knew I was working for an important person. And I told the head of my department that I had to have the tooth removed. Told him where I was going. And I took the bus to the dentist and they put me under. In those days they used sodium pentothal, I don't think they do that today. When I woke up, there was Mr. Chandler, he was in my room waiting for me to wake up to take me home. I didn't have a car. He was very fond of me, but I think mainly because I was very good at what I did.

Q. How did you work? Did he dictate and ... did you handwrite or type?

Yes. I typed. But I took in shorthand first and then I typed it and then he made decisions about.

Q. Was this in writing a script?

Yes. And also, he wrote some articles for the *Atlantic*, I think, and that was part of my job as well.

Q. Were you contracted to the studios at the time?

I was working for the studios. The studios paid me, yes.

Q. I've put some questions together, but I want to know about you. Can I ask you that? I wanted to know, you grew up in New York, is that correct? Where exactly in New York?

Yes. 2430 Stanton Street. I finished high school at 15 and I worked, my first job ... we were on welfare and the whole idea of working was to get off welfare. I think that's quite different from the people today. For many, not all people today. It was shameful to be on welfare.

Q. Where did you go to school?

P.S. Four. It was about... [*Down in the Village, isn't it?*] No, no, it's below First Street, and it was six blocks from the East River, which today is very fashionable. It was a slum. Oh yes. Up to sixth grade I went there ... I remember something. My mother was fearful of everything in life. My father brought home skates for my sister and myself, and my mother took them and threw them into a place where there was no way to get them out. And years later when I asked her why, she said, "But you might have fallen." And I have had to fight that with my children, and it was a very difficult task.

Q. What about your father? What was he like?

He died when I was ten, so it was not easy for me to know him as well as I might. He would put me on his lap when I was about three years old, and he would caress my hair and use baseball Yiddish and he would say, he called me a *loyashin kup*. The head of a lawyer. My mother would say don't put her on your lap, she's too old, it's a *shanda*. Which means it's a shame. Old fashioned ideas. They were immigrants.

Q. You were first generation. You were born here. Why did they leave Austria?

Well, the pogroms. I know more about my mother ... [*during the thirties?*] Oh, before. They didn't know each other in Austria. They met and married in New York.

Q. What did your father do, Dorothy?

He was a pushcart peddler. He died at 40. He had had a heart attack two years before that. And my mother always thought that he died because ... well, let me tell you what his day was like. He would walk to, I think it was probably two or three miles, to where his pushcart was. It used to be where they held horses, but now it was a place where pushcart peddlers left their carts to stay overnight. And everything on it, he sold needles, pins, slippers. He had a special place in ... I can't remember the name of the street. What happened is that he would take everything off the pushcart and put it into two suitcases and walk home carrying the big suitcases. My mother thought that was what hurt his heart. I will tell you that one of the memories I have, which is so ... it could have happened yesterday — I just remember it in every detail. My sister and I would go down and wait for him to come home. And when we saw him carrying those two suitcases, and he saw us, he'd put them down and we ran into his arms. It's a great memory. I was his favorite, and my sister was my mother's. She was older.

Q. Dorothy, what was your maiden name?

Gruber. My mother came here when she was 13, and I wish I had been a different kid of child and found out more about her than I know. I do know that she was hidden in a truck with something over her they couldn't see her ... this was before the Nazis, this was the early 20th century. I don't know where she got the money, but she got on a ship, alone, and she was, what do they call it, steerage. And she would tell me about the smells and the food and the things that happened. Unbearable.

Q. Did she know anybody in America?

No. She went through Ellis Island, and her name and my father's name is on the wall of honor. I arranged that with my sister. It was a wonderful experience. On the bus going to Ellis Island I met a woman who went to the same high school that I did. We didn't know

each other. It was just incredible. Seward Park High School. It was probably seven or eight blocks away from my home. Of course we walked. My mother was the only woman at the end of the sixth grade, the teachers took their classes and walked from the sixth grade to the new high school, and my mother was the only one who walked with us so we wouldn't get hurt, so we wouldn't fall.

Q. So your mother came here at 13, and you at 15 came on the train to Los Angeles by yourself without knowing anyone. Why did you come out here?

The movies. We lived a very insular life. If someone knocked at the door we couldn't open it very often because the tub that you bathe in was in the kitchen. The kitchen was about the size of this table, and no heat. No hot water. The toilet down the hall for six families. We only took a bath once a week because there were very few closets, the way there are today, for dishes and cereal boxes and so on. So everything was on that tabletop that closed the tub. They also had to heat the water. So it was horrible. And when I went to the movies after month after I started working, and we got off welfare, my mother would give me twenty cents. Ten cents for the movie, which was on the second balcony, and ten cents for a hot dog and cola on the way home. I suddenly realized that there was a different kind of world. I had no idea. Because everyone around us was poor. We didn't have a radio, we didn't have a phone, we didn't have anything. But I was not denied that as the only person. Everyone was poor.

Q. Did your parents feel that coming to America offered them opportunities? Going to California offered you opportunities?

Of course. I do think of it that way. I thought of it, I have to get away from here, because I know there's a different life.

Q. What was it like, Dorothy? It intrigues me so much that at 16 or 17 you got on that train ...

Cried all the way to Buffalo. Scared to death.

Q. Did your parents support the idea of you coming out here?

No. I started asking when I was about 13. I want to go to California. I guess the movies had something to do with it. Hollywood. Although I never thought about being an actress, I just knew there was something ... I wasn't pretty enough. I just saw that they spoke a different way, that they lived a different way, that they acted a different way. They ate a different way, and I didn't know there were people like that. How was I to know? Everything was like my life.

Q. Why did you quit crying after Buffalo?

Cried myself out, I guess. I had a very interesting experience when the next morning, it took 4 days to get here. I'm trying to remember ... a woman, she was probably in her thirties, she sat down next to me and said, "Why are you crying?" And I told her I was coming from New York to Los Angeles and I was scared to death. I had about \$40 with me. It was worth about \$400 today. But how did I get the train ticket? I stole the money. From my bosses. *[Did they ever find out?]* No. My mother ... we were on welfare. In those days it was called "relief." She didn't support my leaving. She didn't have any money to give me. What happened was, I worked for a company called Hecht & Burns. They manufactured very expensive sweaters for women, and I was the secretary to the two men who owned the company. There were about 25 or 30 salesmen all around the country, who would send samples of the sweaters. They then sold them to whoever, and they sent us the information about where to send them and how much they were and so on, and we sent them stamps. So every time I was given \$30 to get 100 stamps for the office, I took about 10 or 15 stamps and took them home until I had 100 stamps. It took me a year and a half. Then I would take the stamps at home and lick them together until I could make a roll. The first time I went back to New York was quite a while after that, maybe ten years, the first thing I did was I went to that address and looked at the directory and they weren't there. I was anxious to return the money, I could have easily,

but they weren't there. I will tell you that I felt guilty about that all my life. But, to help me get over it, I thought of it as someone who's hungry who steals food. So, let's have tea and I'll stop talking.

Q. I wanted to ask you, how did L.A. differ from New York? In those days.

It was in the early forties. Let me tell you about this woman.... The war had either just started or was on the verge of starting. Between '40 and '41. The woman who sat down next to me said to me, "I know Los Angeles and I know Hollywood, and I'm looking for an apartment. Would you be interested in sharing it with me?" And I forgot to tell you that the only thing I had was the name and phone number of a friend of my uncle's. He said just keep it with you in case of emergency. I said, "I would love to," because I didn't know where I was going. I had no idea. But you know what? I was scared, but I knew instinctively that I would be okay. I knew I could find a place to live, and I knew I could find a job because I was very good at what I did, and I deliberately made myself so good so I would never be poor again.

Q. When you came to California, did you think about working in the movie industry? Was that in your head?

I think it was. I didn't know what else to do. Of course, the movies had impressed me and got me here. Let me finish this story about this woman. The first day there I went to RKO and they told me that they didn't have an opening at the time, but they told me that Paramount was right across the street. So I went to Paramount and they gave me a test, shorthand and dictation and typing and so on. When I finished high school, I won the medals for English, shorthand, and typing. But there was no thought about going to college. I don't know that the world college was ever spoken. None of my friends went to college. I took what was called a course in secretarial skills. So I went to Paramount and she told me that my testing was excellent but they really didn't have anything at the moment. The following day I got a call from her that said Monogram Studios, are you familiar with that? It was the lowest of the low. It was a movie studio, sort of downtown.

They said they had an opening and they were anxious to hire me because of what they were told from Paramount. So I went to bed that night, and at 2 o'clock in the morning this woman woke me up and said, "You have to leave." I said, "What do you mean?" I didn't understand. She said, "You have to leave right now." I said, "Can we wait until the morning?" She said, "No." Well ... I had some thoughts about it later. I packed my bag and called a taxi and said, "Take me to the cheapest hotel you can find," and it ended up being the Roosevelt Hotel. Now it's very fashionable, but in those days it wasn't. I realized that I had no money left. I couldn't stay there more than one day. And I'd often thought that she might have been a prostitute. I never found out, how could I find out? But it was a terrible moment for me. And then I called the number that I had. My uncle's friend. And they were simply wonderful. They said, "We're coming to pick you up, and you can stay with us." That's exactly what happened. They had a two-year-old son and there was no room for me, so they bought a mattress and I slept in the child's room. They only wanted me to... I guess the war was already on, and they wanted me to stay with the child while they went out in the evening. They treated me wonderfully. I ate with them and I helped them in the kitchen, and they were just wonderful to me. But I will tell you two things that happened while I lived there that will give you an idea of how childish I was and I didn't know anything about anything. While I lived there I met a young man who invited me to dinner and I asked them if it would be okay if I went out on this particular night and they said yes. When we came home we sat in the car and in those days it was called necking, mostly just kissing. When I got out of the car and walked into the living room and they had another couple there, visiting, and the woman who owned the house said to me after she introduced me, she said, "Dorothy, you might want to go to the bathroom and clean up." I didn't know what she meant and I went to the bathroom and there was lipstick all over the place. The other incident was, I had to take two buses. I got the job at Monogram Studios and it required taking two buses, and she asked me if I would drop off some cleaning at the cleaners. I said yes, of course, it was on the way. I walked in and they said, cleaned and pressed? And I said, "No, no, just cleaned." We never had anything to be cleaned. When you opened the door of the closet, the smell... my mother used to buy my clothes off a pushcart for 50 cents. My sweet sixteen dress

was, I remember it, gray with a dirndl, you know what a dirndl is? Some of those memories are sad, but okay.

Q. Did you write your mother and tell her you were working at the studios?

I have a letter that she wrote to me even though she couldn't spell, my name even. Of course I wrote to her and she wrote to me. When my father died I was ten and I became a monster to my mother. I didn't know until many years later what the reason was. As you know, she was scared of everything. I'd pretend to faint. The idea was she would say to me, look at your sister, she has gorgeous hair. Look at her teeth, beautiful teeth. And you, you have such ugly eyes, just like I do. They're just nothing eyes. So I guess what I was doing was getting back at her. And also for the loss of my father.

Q. Did she work?

Never. We were on relief until I started to work. I was fifteen when I finished high school and I worked for about two years to save the money and then I left home.

Q. Where did you go after Monogram Studios?

Well, after about three months ... well, I've got to tell you that Ann Corio was the star of the first movie I worked on. Do you know that name? She was a strip tease actress. She was very well known. The movie was written in one week and it was shot in one week. The first check I got, now when I was working in New York I probably made \$20 a week, if that. The check was \$300. Well, because I worked seven days a week and Sunday you got overtime, and Saturday was time and a half. I worked until late every single day. I thought that it was an error and I didn't give a damn, I just put it in my purse and ran.

Paramount called me after about three months and said we have an opening, and even though I knew I wouldn't make that kind of money at Paramount, I just decided it was a

bigger studio and I had more opportunities there, so I left Monogram and went to Paramount.

Q. Who interviewed you there?

Her name was Ruth Digman. She had already given me a test. What's interesting is, the first time I saw Raymond Chandler, I didn't know who he was. He came in to talk to her because his secretary had left. She pointed to me where I was sitting ... there was a glass enclosed thing, and I found out later he said no. I was too young. I was 17 or 18. Then probably a week later, he asked her again for a secretary and I was the only one that was available and he said okay. From then on, I worked for him. Every time he was there.

There was what was called a Green Room. There was coffee there and we played darts. Paramount was called the Country Club of all the studios. I was scared and excited.

Q. So the day to day ... there was the Green Room ...

We sat there, all the secretaries sat there and had coffee and writers would come in and talk to us and when the writer you were attached to needed you, he'd call the woman at the switchboard and she would say, "Dorothy, Mr. Chandler needs you." And I would go in. I had my own desk there, and he would dictate to me. He would lie on the couch very often, and one day he was loaned to MGM to do a screenplay of his book, *Lady in the Rain*. He said to them, "I want Dorothy to come with me." They said, "You don't understand, we don't loan secretaries." He said, "I won't go." So every morning, I didn't have a car, a car picked me up at my apartment and took me to MGM. It wasn't a limo, it was just a car, and take me home. They were in Culver City. Sometimes he'd be there when I got there and sometimes he'd come later. We lasted about three weeks because they wouldn't give their writers a couch in the office. He told me, and Judith has it in her book, that he did his best thinking laying on the couch. So we lasted three weeks. The other thing was, at Paramount if I needed supplies, I would just go to the supply room and pick it up. At MGM I had to make out a requisition in triplicate to get a pencil. No

wonder Paramount was called the Country Club. So we worked at his house the rest of the time. He lived in the Jewish area near Fairfax. Drexel. I met his wife, Cissy. She was twenty years older than he, but she lied to everyone about her age, and she was a great beauty. Even in her sixties, which is probably when I met her, she was still beautiful. He was in his early forties. This is something I didn't know. He had had affairs with every secretary, and that's why he thought I was too young. I think. But he never, never ... I will tell you one thing. There was never anything personal between us. But one day I was in the Green Room and I was wearing a white turtleneck sweater, and in the movie with Fred MacMurray, *Double Indemnity*, Barbara Stanwyck was wearing a white turtleneck sweater. Raymond Chandler looked at me and he looked me up and down and he said, "You could have played the part."

Q. When he was dictating all this steamy stuff, were you shocked by any of it?

No, because I had been at Paramount for maybe six months, and the first time a secretary had said f-u-c-k, I wanted the floor to open up and swallow me. I can't tell you, for a long time I didn't even know what it meant. But I knew it was a dirty word. But by the time I was there for six months, I was using it. I remember one night I was giving a dinner party and my oldest daughter was about three years old. She was in her bed and we were all in the living room, and she came in and said in front of everyone, "Where the fuck is my blanket?" At that point I stopped using that word.

Q. Detaching yourself from him being your boss, just as a man, what was he like? If people could just see him as a person, what would you say?

He was very English. He wore tweeds a lot. But as I say, there was very little personal ... I think he was a very unhappy man. At that time I thought to myself, he was so famous and he must make so much money, how could he be so miserable? Of course, today is ridiculous. But did you know, I'm sure you did, that he was an alcoholic? As opposed to Judith's book, I only saw him as a periodic drunk. I think she, in her book, has a history of his drinking before he became a writer. I didn't see him drinking, but he was a total

drunk for weeks at a time. He came in drunk and he left drunk. And I had two experiences, I think I may have told you about them. One was about the eggs. In those days drunk driving was not as openly objectionable as it is today. I think there were fewer cars, for example. He would pick me up at Paramount to take me to his home to work. And one day, he said, I have to stop and get a dozen eggs for Cissy. I said, fine, and he went into a store and came back and put the dozen eggs on the seat and sat on them. He never said a word and I never said a word, because it was too embarrassing. What was I going to say? We got to the house and he left and went and changed his clothes and then we started working. The other story I have to tell you when he was drunk, he took me to lunch at a Beverly Hills hotel and we were sitting in a room where we could see the pool and the diving board. Suddenly... I knew he was drunk, so I kept saying, "Ray..." I don't think I ever called him Ray, I called him Mr. Chandler. "Let me order some breakfast for you." It was about 11:30 or 12 o'clock. He said, "No, I don't want anything to eat." I said, "You really need to eat," and I ordered some eggs and bacon and so on, and he ordered a drink. Suddenly he said to me, "What is your sister's phone number?" He knew a great deal more about me than I knew about him. Actually, he said, "What is Sylvia's phone number?" I said, "Why?" He said, "I want to talk to her." I gave it to him and he called the waiter and he brought the phone. I was very impressed. He got on the phone and he said, "Sylvia, this is Raymond Chandler. I'm having lunch with your sister and I just thought that you'd be interested to know that Betty Grable has just dived off the diving board, totally naked." Which of course was a lie. Sylvia just ... well she didn't say anything, what could she say to that? These are stories you can't make up. They're just ridiculous. The reason his secretary before I came on the scene left the studio was because she was in love with him. She was older, in her late thirties maybe, and she knew that he wouldn't divorce Cissy. He was in love with Cissy all his life. Do you know how they got married? She was married to a very good friend of his.... Did you read the book? He apparently just had affairs and affairs and affairs.

Q. Did she know about them?

I don't know. She wasn't very nice to him. She wasn't pleasant at all. She was ... when I walked in she would say "Good morning," or whatever, and that was it. If I didn't know why she didn't speak to me at all until I realized that she was afraid of me, kind of.

Q. Because all the other secretaries had had affairs.

Exactly. There was one incident. His birthday had rolled around and I wanted to show my appreciation for the checks that he gave me and for being so nice to me. I spent a good deal more than I could afford on getting him – he was a pipe smoker — so I got him a stand with two or three pipes on it, and it was quite expensive. When I gave it to him, it was at his house. She was there, and she walked out of the room. She had gotten him a pipe stand with one pipe, a small thing. I had gone all out, to say thank you to him, and I think that infuriated her, or whatever.

Q. Did he ever talk about her?

No.

Q. What was he like as a boss? Was he a good boss?

He was wonderful to me. I'll tell you another story. At one point, Paramount ... see, I was supporting my mother. I got her to come out from New York and live with me, and we lived right across the street from Paramount. We had a living room and a kitchen and a bathroom. No bedroom. So I slept on the couch, we had a pull down bed, from the wall, and she slept in the bed. Murphy bed. I've forgot what I was going to say. It's not okay. It bugs me! We lived across from Paramount because I didn't have a car. It was easy. On Marathon. It was directly across the street from the gate. Across Melrose. Bronson, the Bronson gate. I didn't need time with my mother. My job was more meaningful to me. My mother and I didn't get along.

Q. Did he ever make a pass at you? Did you ever see him make a pass at the other secretaries?

Never. I just heard the story of the secretary before me, that she left because she was in love with him and knew he wouldn't get a divorce. Most of the things I know about him were from Judith's book.

Q. What about your experience with him, about how he actually worked. When he wasn't in collaboration with Billy Wilder. Did he scribble notes?

No, he dictated to me. He was on the couch, lying down most of the time. I think he had, by the time he called me in to his office, he had already been thinking about that scene, so he was a reasonably good dictator in the sense that he didn't have long spaces where he would think — he knew what he was going to say. Of course, after I typed it up, there were changes and so on, but I don't remember him reaching for words.

Q. Did he take time out for lunches or breaks?

Yes, he took me to lunch reasonably after, we went to Lucy's across the street. The Nickodell was close, and I have a story about the Nickodell. It was about a block or two down from Paramount. The story I have is that my mother was not — she didn't keep a kosher house. She did until my father died, and then she gave it up. I took her to dinner at Nickodell's one night and she ordered something that had shrimp in it. I said, "Mom, I want you to know that there's shrimp in there and if you're religiously Jewish, you won't eat shrimp." She said, "Well, I'll try it." And then later on she said, "This is too good to have shrimp in it. I don't believe it has shrimp in it." And she loved Chinese food from then on.

Q. Did Sissy ever come to the studios?

No. I never saw her at the studios.

Q. Did the other secretaries talk about her?

No, I don't think they ... he was a very private person. As I say, he knew a great deal more about me and my family than I knew about him. I just knew him as my boss and how nice he was to me and how caring, really, a man he was, to me. I didn't know about his relationships with other people.

Q. But you knew that he was in love with her, and you knew that he drank a lot.

Yes. And he had a cat. He loved that cat, I forget the name. Taki, something like that.

Q. Did you go to his house to work?

Yes, during that period when he was at MGM. The rest of the time he came in to Paramount so there was no need to go to his home.

Q. Was he different at home than he was at Paramount?

I don't think so. But when he was dictated, he dictated sitting up at his desk at home, whereas when he was dictating.... I don't know why.

Q. So at the studio, at Paramount, he would lie on the sofa, but at home he sat at the desk. Maybe because if Cissy walked in he wanted to be sitting at the desk.

I never thought of that. Possibly so.

Q. I'm in a work mode, whereas if I'm on the sofa at home ... it's too informal, you know.

Q. How long did you work at Paramount?

At least fifteen years. And what happened after that was, there was a man, I can't believe I've forgotten his name, you know about Joe Siström?

Q. You were lovers, right? When you think back about him now, do you think he was quite a guy? What do you think when you think about him?

Let me tell you a story about him. When I was a teenager, my friends and I would occasionally talk about the man we wanted to marry. I'm talking about 12, 13, 14 ... and they would say I want to marry someone who's a good dancer, I like black hair, or whatever. When it came my turn, I had no idea why I said this, I said, "I want to marry a man who can tell me why the moon is yellow." One day we were having lunch at Lucy's, and I remembered that, and I said, "Joe, do you know why the moon is yellow?" and he took out a pen and on the tablecloth he explained to me — I didn't listen to it, I was just so overwhelmed by the idea that he knew why the moon was yellow. I had no intentions of breaking up his marriage. I had no intentions of any of the men I went with to marry them, that's why they were all Catholic and they were all married. I didn't want to get married.

Q. Was he a good man, Joe Siström?

Well, aside from the fact that he had an affair with me and he had an affair with one other woman, a dancer, but I don't know whether you would call that a good man. I think it is not a decent thing to do. I think that men are different from women physically in the sense that it is easier for them to have affairs in marriage. I think that's true.

Q. Let me ask you about the studio. Among people you knew was that the studio to work at, Paramount, was that the fun studio?

Yes, they called it the country club. There was a strike at Paramount, and I don't remember at all what it was about. No, I wasn't part of it, but I had gone around sometime early on when I was working there, I wanted to start thinking about unionizing. The secretaries didn't want to, but the reason was that Paramount was very smart. They gave us the same amount of money that the unions did and they gave us the same time off and so on. But I remember going around and talking to people about the good things about a union. I remember Universal Studios fired many people who had been there for 30 or 40 years so that it would be before their 65th birthday so they wouldn't have to pay ... and that's why I'm still a union member in my head. My mother wore a sandwich board – do you know what that is? She was working at a factory and this was in the early 1900's and she was on strike for nine months. She only had one pair of shoes and the soles were worn off. She wasn't the only one, many of those women did, and they cut out cardboard, so it was the Ladies International Garment Union, and I knew that story and she had talked about it often. So when the strike happened at Paramount, the strikers, you know, I was the sole support of my mother, we had no savings, we just lived from day to day. I just couldn't, I couldn't. I think that psychologically I knew I wouldn't be fired, although they said if you pass the strike line you're going to get fired. I think they told all of us that.

Q. Did any of the secretaries pass the strike line? Did they get fired?

I don't know. But I didn't pass it. I couldn't because of my mother. It didn't affect my job and I'll tell you why. When I started high school, the first thing I did was, the hour they gave you for lunch, I went to the library and I took out books on shorthand and typing, and I knew everything about shorthand before my first class. So that's why I got so good at it. I didn't want to be poor again, and I knew if I had the skills ... I think that psychologically I thought they're not going to fire me. Every writer that came into the Green Room asked for me because of my reputation. Every single writer who came to Paramount said, "Is Dorothy free?"

Q. Did you work for Chandler the whole time you were at Paramount?

No, I worked for many men. When he was gone, I worked for Billy Wilder for a month. His secretary was ill or on vacation. He was a charmer. I was madly in love with him two minutes after I met him. I'm sitting at the desk and he walks in, and I'm reading a book called "Fight Against Fear: the 50 Minute Hour" and he walks over to me and he looks at me, he looks at the book, and he says, "Are you fearful?" I just wanted to lie down and say, "Here, take me." But it was the excitement of listening to him. I think at that time he was working with Samuel Taylor. It wasn't the first man he worked with, the famous producer? Bracket. I think that relationship ended or maybe Brackett died, I don't know. And to listen to them speaking about the script, and me having to take down every word they said and read it back to them, it was such an exciting thing for me. The creativity. That was just wonderful.

Q. What other bosses do you remember having there?

I worked for two playwrights, I can't remember their names. I worked for Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin. Did I tell you that story? I was assigned to them, although they had different bungalows. The first day I sat down at the desk and after about an hour the phone rang and it was his wife. I found out that he just played around like crazy, Jerry Lewis. She said, "Who is this?" I said, "Dorothy." She said, "What are you doing there?" I said, "I'm assigned to be Mr. Lewis' secretary." Two hours later she was there. But you know what? I didn't know. I didn't even know to be upset about it. I really didn't like him at all.

Q. A lot of people I worked with in charities said he had a foul mouth and he ordered people around. I heard he wasn't a very nice person.

Well, I'm sitting at my desk one day and he comes over with a water gun and he does this to me and puts water down there. The fact is, he was very generous with money. He had a man working for him who was, his eyes were not good. He could see, but not very well. So everything that he had to read I typed on a typewriter with big letters. And Jerry

would pay me \$100 for typing a script. In those days a hundred dollars was a great deal of money. So I accepted that. He made passes at me, he threw me on the couch in his room, and when I said, “What are you doing?” he said, “What do you want? Romance?” And I said “Yes, not the back seat of a car!” or something like that. But he was just ugly. I walked in one day and in the office next to his, he always had a lot of men around him, sycophants. Hangers-on. There are about four or five men sitting on chairs, pretending that they’re playing instruments. One’s playing the violin, one’s playing the piano, and so on. When he sees me walk in, he says, “Dorothy, come in here, you’re the girl singer.” He told me to stand up on a chair and pretend to sing. That got to me. I thought, I cannot take this, I don’t care how much he pays me. I called my department head and I told her that I really couldn’t stand it any more, and she said, “Come home.”

Q. Did Raymond pay you well?

He didn’t pay me. Paramount paid me.

Q. When did you leave Paramount?

I was working for a man, a writer, and we got along quite well. I can’t think of his name. I worked for him for a very long time. I’m trying to think what he wrote, but I can’t remember. One day he called me up and asked me to come to lunch with him, and he said he and Jackie Cooper were starting a new series called “Hennessy.” He wondered if I would leave Paramount and come to work with them. My mother had just died about six months previous to that. Had she been alive, I’m not sure I would have taken the chance because I needed security. But he took me to lunch, and by that time I was probably making maybe \$200 a week or \$250 a week, something like that. During lunch he explained to me that they were starting a TV series and they’d like me to work for them. He said, “How much are you making?” Well, I told him I was making \$550. He said “How about \$650?”

Q. Did Raymond Chandler get in touch with you when your mother died? Did he know about it?

I don't think he knew about it. He was out of the picture by then. He had left Paramount, he moved to San Diego. I do remember reading about his trying to commit suicide in his shower, remember that? After Cissy died. I told you that I never thought of calling him. But when I read her book, I thought, how come you didn't call him. But I think the reason I didn't was I felt he would take it as an intrusion. But I don't know ... we weren't intimate friends, I don't know what I would have said to him, but when I finished reading her book I thought, it touched me, I was so miserable... you know, he wrote me many letters. You saw two of them. I think I may have told you that one of the letters, a long letter, I think from England, the last sentence was, Dorothy, no matter how you live you die like a dog in an alley. Exactly those words, I've never forgotten them. I don't think he was right. I knew that he was unhappy. I didn't understand or recognize the reasons, but I knew he was a private person, he didn't share anything with me.

Q. Did you ever see him happy? Was there any day or time ...?

Probably there must have been, when someone told a joke or ... I think of him as just a private, unhappy man.

Q. Was there a game?

The word game. I told you that story about the word game? It was Joe Sistrom, Ian Hunter, and I can't remember the others. There were three or four men who played that game constantly, and it was like a square thing with lines like a crossword puzzle. And what happened was that one person gave the letter, whatever letter they wanted, and you wrote the letter down in the place where you might be the best. Somewhat like Scrabble but not really. For example, if they said "S", you would put it at the end of a line, thinking that would be the right place. I would watch those games intensely. I loved it. They would ask me to play and I said, "Are you kidding?"

Q. I bet you beat them! With your English and your typing...

It was a total fluke, there was no way I could compete with these guys. No, no, please believe me, these were brilliant men and I was a learner. I wanted to learn a lot but I couldn't compete with them. It was a fluke, I don't know how it happened. I won that game. I never played again. I wouldn't, it was too good to be true.

Q. Just for a minute, think back to when you arrived in L.A., get an image in your head, and then compare the two Los Angeles in a few broad strokes.

I didn't know anything about Los Angeles. I went from an apartment to work. I went home. Eventually, I would meet people and have friends and so on. It was as different as life itself then and now. Do you know, it was a different era. It was less violent, it was more colorful in the sense that Hollywood Boulevard was dreamy, it was lovely stores, women's clothes, and so on. Now, I haven't been there for a long time, but I think it's a slum now. I guess they're trying to do a few things now. Today, I don't know what to say about it today. I still love Los Angeles, I still do. I didn't see very much of it early on, because I didn't have a car, I didn't have many friends to start with. I remember going down by bus to Bullocks downtown, the day after Christmas because they had their big sale and I would come home, my children were with me already, they were very young. I would come home with maybe \$500 worth of clothes for \$150. And I'd lay them on the bed, I've always been interested in clothes, and they were dressed just beautifully. I got such pleasure out of that. You're asking me certain questions that I don't really have an answer to.

I sometimes wonder what I'm going to do the day ... let's see, November 5th, because I am so tied up with this. I just can't stop watching and reading, I don't know what to do with myself.