

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Appliances of the Past Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 837

CATHERINE GALKO

Interviewed

by

Robert Fabian

on

June 6, 1985

CATHERINE GALKO

Mrs. Catherine Galko was born on March 2, 1913 in Campbell, Ohio. She acquired a thorough education by attending Campbell High School, then studying at Kent State University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in the field of Education in 1940. She worked in teaching for several years until her marriage to Michael Galko in 1943. For short periods, Mrs. Galko taught at Campbell High School while married until her retirement in 1977. Today, Mrs. Galko is a member of the Ohio Retired Teachers Association, and is active in various church activities.

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INTERVIEWEE: CATHERINE GALKO

INTERVIEWER: Robert Fabian

SUBJECT: Use of appliances from past and present,
personal experiences

DATE: June 6, 1985

F: This is an interview with Mrs. Catherine Galko for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program concerning the Hoover Company. This interview is being conducted by Robert Fabian on June 6, 1985.

To start out with, could you tell me a little bit of background into your family and your parents, what your childhood was like, where you grew up and when you were born, where you were from?

G: I was born. . . At that time it was called East Youngstown. My mother was Catherine and my father's name was John Lisko. I never was in want when I was little, I was fortunate. But I was unfortunate because I had an invalid mother; at the age of nine my mother became an invalid and died when I was sixteen. I was the oldest of five children.

We had a housekeeper, but I had to do a lot. I learned a lot because no housekeeper with five children . . . Five of us in the family, mother and father and seven and she would make the eighth, but they change. They would work so long and then we would get somebody else. I always had to show them what to do because my mother was a complete invalid.

F: Where in East Youngstown did you live? Do you remember the name of the street?

G: I lived on Robinson Road.

F: Robinson Road?

G: Yes, but we also moved with my parents out on Coitsville Road. We had a big place out there. We had somebody come and take care of us. When my youngest sister was born, my dad had brought over somebody from Europe. She stayed with us until she got married and then she moved away. Then when we moved out on Coitsville Road my folks built a farmhouse. It was on ten acres of land, we built them a couple of rooms and then they lived out there and took care of us. That was with her husband and she had a child then. We didn't live there more than about three years I believe, and then we moved back to Robinson Road in Campbell. My mother died in 1929 when I was sixteen years old and I was the oldest and then, as you know, things got pretty bad. We had a house-keeper for a few months, but then the Depression hit and so my father no longer could afford to keep one.

F: What kind of work did your father do?

G: My father, at that time, was safety and service director of Campbell. He was in politics and my mother was also.

The Depression came and I graduated in 1931 from Memorial High School. On Sunday morning, I was already at Kent State University with three of my friends. I immediately enrolled.

F: How was it that you went to college? A lot of women after they left high school just got married and had a family and that was it. Why did you go to college?

G: It was something that I didn't know. My mother was born in Youngstown, Ohio and had gone to school and she had become a seamstress, and quite a well-known one, too, in her day.

F: Did she work outside of the home or in the home?

G: After she was married she never did work, this was while she was single.

F: Was your father from Youngstown, Ohio too?

G: No, my father was born in Czechoslovakia. He came to this country at the age of sixteen. He came to Pennsylvania because a lot of people from Czechoslovakia would go to the mines. My father walked in the mines one day and the next day he came out and said that wasn't for him. In Europe, he was trained because they would train children very young there, as a machinist. When he came to Youngstown . . . As far as I remember when he came in, where in the world he worked, I never did find that out but he got into politics immediately. He was a constable, a street commissioner, but he also was in the saloon business. That was the other reason

why we had money.

F: I was going to ask how you financed your college education.

G: Being that my mother and my grandmother lived here in Youngstown and my grandmother became a widow quite early. She supported her two daughters by keeping cows in those days. There weren't that many people around that you could have them with chickens and whatnot. At the time of her death, she died from the flu in 1918, she left a house to each daughter, plus money. My mother had her own money, not that my dad didn't make good money, because I can't remember from the time I was five years old that we didn't have a car. My dad had a horse and buggy before then because he was in the saloon business.

My mother knew she was going to die and I happened to have that premonition, I knew she was going to die too, but I didn't tell her. A couple weeks before she died, I found out later from the woman that came to our house from Europe that more or less looked after us until we grew up. We still are very close to this woman, she happens to be a first cousin to my dad. She was the one that told me years later, which I was very sorry she didn't tell me at the time, that my mother was on the porch and she was there with my dad and my mother said, "You know I am going to die soon." She said, "I have five children and one wish." My dad said to her, "What is the one wish?" She said, "That Catherine goes to college," and I was the oldest. He said, "If that's all you want, if I have to work until the flesh falls off my bones, she will get to go."

I often wondered why when I graduated on Thursday and on Sunday morning I got up and I said, "Dad, you are going to drive us to Kent. I am going to college." He said to me, "I thought you wanted to go to a . . ." I wanted to go to a state university down south. He asked me, "How come you changed your mind?" I said that Dorothy, Julie, Antoinette were going and I wanted to go with them. He said, "Well, if that is what you want, go." After I finished with that, because I went right away in the summer, I did two years of college in a year and a half, and I started teaching in January of 1933.

F: How did you decide to go into teaching? That profession was open to women or what?

G: Again you are getting back to my background. My mother would talk to us all the time because I think she knew that we sensed that she was going to die soon. She said to me, "Catherine, what would you like to be?" I said, "Maybe a nurse or a teacher." She looked up at me and she said, "No, Catherine, you have done all the nursing that you have to do in your life. Be a teacher instead."

F: So you started teaching in 1933?

G: In 1933, yes, in Campbell. I started right away in Campbell. When I started it was in the height of the Depression, tough to get a job in those days.

F: How long did you teach?

G: At that time I taught until I . . . I got married on February 27, 1943 and I wanted to finish out the year and they wanted me to come back because by that time they were taking people into the Army already, so I was able to teach if I wanted. When I started teaching, if you got married you lost your job. That was the way it was. The principal said that he wanted me back again, but my husband at that time said, "Oh, no, no. You can't go back to teaching."

Well, we went around looking for apartments. It was hard to find this and that and everything else. I have so much faith in prayer that if I prayed hard enough my husband would let me go back. He said, "Well, if I get this apartment I will let you go back to teaching."

I saw the superintendent before then to make sure that he left the job open for me because they had a substitute while I was gone. I had asked for two weeks at that time, and they gave me the two weeks off. I went to the superintendent and I said, "Give me one more week. I think I can talk my husband into letting me go back teaching." He said to me, "Catherine, you could have a month if you want," because John Peters was my principal and he said, "He wants you back very badly." Well, believe it or not, in that one week I was able to return back to teaching. So, I finished that year. After that I got pregnant so I never went back. They still wanted me in September but I never went back to teaching then.

I never went back to teaching again until thirteen years later after we had moved to Rochester, New York, and invested our money in the shoe business. It didn't make a go of it too well. So I went to see about my oldest daughter in school, she was having a little bit of trouble, and I got to talking to the superintendent of the schools and the secretary that was there. When I told them that I was a graduate of Kent State University they said, "How would you like to work for us?" I said, "Fine, but I have got to be certified in the state of New York." He said, "Don't worry about that." The secretary gave me an application and as I was walking out of the office he said, "None of that. Let's sit down here and fill that thing out right now." In a couple of weeks I was certified in the state of New York.

F: How long did you teach in New York?

G: I was on the substitute list for a couple of years because

then we moved back to Youngstown. When I came back here, it had been sixteen years since I had taught in the state of Ohio, and it meant that I would have had to go back to school for a refresher course. When I sent in my applications and things to Rochester, New York, the applications were filled out so well and since I had taught there, they reinstated my certificate from the state of Ohio. I went back into teaching again in September.

I was kind of late. I came back real fast in September. I had called up down in Campbell where I had taught before and I said, "If I can teach anyplace, I am recertified," and I gave her the number of my certificate. She said, "Oh, yes. You can teach anywhere now in the state of Ohio." On the first day of school she called me up and she said, "How would you like to work for us?" I said, "Oh, my. I wasn't prepared; I thought I was going to have myself another vacation for at least another month." She said, "Oh, no, could you come in?" I said, "Gee, you will have to give me a couple of days." Then I went in on Friday of the first week of school, to show me what I was going to do. When they gave me my assignment I wanted to back out of it because it said I had to teach music, art, fourth and fifth grade subjects, but they talked me into it and I kept it.

F: After you were married, did you like having a job teaching outside of the home?

G: Yes, very much. I couldn't do it now anymore because I was out of it too long. I was never able to go back because I had other things that I had to keep on doing. I have taught every subject from kindergarten through eighth grade, except in a regular class I didn't teach the first grade. Teaching slow learners for twelve years, I covered that too, very well. It was funny that I had all those experiences. The only thing I will say is that teaching slow learners for twelve years, I would have left it before but I knew I wanted to retire soon being, that I was getting older.

F: When did you finally retire?

G: In June of 1977. I'm retired now already eight years. I never went back but to say that I don't miss it, yes, I did for awhile and I like it very much. I would say they were the happiest days of my life. I enjoyed my work very, very much.

F: What was it like doing housework since your mother was an invalid? Did you do a lot of housework when you were back in East Youngstown?

G: I learned to do things very quickly. At the age of ten, I could cook a meal for a dozen people.

F: Did you have running water and electricity in your house?

G: Yes, we always had that. We always had two bathrooms too. As I started to tell you, from the time I was a little girl when we lived in Youngstown, I remember my grandmother coming and bringing us milk when we lived on Steel Street on the west side. We had a telephone, car and I never remember being without a telephone. I want you to know that our doors were left open; years ago you could leave the doors open.

F: What kind of stove did you have when you were doing your cooking, can you describe it for me?

G: Yes, we had nothing but gas when I lived in the city. When we lived out on Coitsville Road, which was country, we had an electric stove and a coal stove. We had two stoves in our kitchen.

F: What was the coal stove like? What did it look like?

G: It was a black stove.

F: Was it cast iron?

G: Yes, it was a cast iron stove. It made it nice because in those days when we had electrical storms the electric stove would go out of whack. We had to cook on the coal stove then.

F: Was it easier to cook on one than the other? What do you think?

G: Truthfully speaking, I can't ever remember baking anything in the coal stove because like I say we had the two stoves. We did bake in the electric stove. During the electric storms when the electricity went off, we always had something in the oven, but we were fortunate because it was always done before the oven cooled off. I'm sure the housekeeper that we had used the coal stove to bake in, but I never did.

F: Was it a messy procedure cleaning the coal out?

G: I didn't do too much of that because I was quite young. We left there when I was in the seventh grade. When we came to Robinson Road we had a gas stove.

F: Did you do a lot of the cooking and baking then?

G: I didn't do much baking, but I did cook. You didn't hear me say I was baking at that time.

F: What year was this about that you can remember using the gas stove?

G: My mother died in 1929, go back six years, so 1923. When we lived on the farm I cooked on the electric stove. We had

housekeepers though, I would just have to do it between times.

F: Did your housekeeper do the laundry?

G: Yes.

F: What did she use?

G: We had a washing machine, believe it or not.

F: Was it an electric one or water power?

G: I think it was electric. I know when we first moved, and I was only five or six years old when we lived on Robinson Road, in those days the buildings had the gas lights plus electricity. We had the gas lights too so if the electricity went out then you could put the gas lights on.

F: Did you ever have any problems with the gas?

G: No, I don't ever remember having any trouble with gas at all.

I will say that in those days you learned to work quite young. My brothers and sisters pitched in to help, after my father had let the housekeeper go. We shared the work and we took turns cooking. My dad was a very good cook, he had to be I guess, since my mother was an invalid. We would go on picnics and everything else.

F: After you got married, how was doing the housework then? I mean, you had to do it mostly on your own then, how did you like doing that?

G: That never bothered me. That only thing that I didn't like about housework is doing the same thing over and over again. That was the thing that I didn't like. It's everyday you have to rid up, it's everyday you have to do this and that.

F: What kind of appliances did you first have when you got married in your home?

G: I had everything. I started with a gas stove, but I didn't like it.

F: This was in the 1940's?

G: Yes, I was married in February 1943. It was hard to get things at that time, but I had a nice apartment on Hollywood Avenue on the south side. I had everything. I got my furniture and everything else.

F: Did you have a sweeper?

G: Yes.

F: What kind of sweeper did you have?

G: Hoover. We had sweepers down home when I was a kid too.

F: What did they look like?

G: They were just heavier and bulkier. I would compare them to the Kirby sweepers because they still are that heavy.

F: Do you think they were a good quality sweeper?

G: Yes, they would last longer than they do today. I think anything that was first made lasts longer than it does today. I think the workmanship is rather shoddy than it was at that time. I think maybe they are starting to improve a little bit, I don't know. I have a refrigerator in my basement that is thirty-four years old now. I've never had any repairs on it.

F: It's electrical?

G: Yes, electrical and it is a Westinghouse. It was frost free, but it's not like the new frost free. We moved that up to Rochester and back again and it is still going. In the meantime, I had bought the double door one and this is the second double door that I've had. The first one only lasted me seven years. Now, I have a Frigidaire and I've had it repaired two or three times already and the double door one, they don't hold up the way they used to.

F: What kind of refrigeration did you have when you were living in Campbell?

G: We had a gas refrigerator.

F: What was it like?

G: It was good. My husband used it in his business after when he went into business awhile. We left it there and it was still going. I forget the name of that darn refrigerator.

We had iceboxes when I was a young girl and I remember you had to put a card in the window and then the ice man would bring you so much ice. We had to take turns emptying the pan underneath the refrigerator. In the meantime, we had too many floods, so finally my dad decided to put the refrigerator out on the porch so that if a flood came it was alright because it was on the porch then. That's where we put the refrigerator then, but we still had to empty the pan when we would think of it.

F: How big was the icebox?

G: We had a pretty large one. They chipped off the ice and we

would pick it up.

F: Did you have a garden or do any canning?

G: No.

F: How did you store your fresh vegetables in the wintertime ?

G: I don't remember, besides having a sandbox that we put carrots and parsley in. Outside of that I don't remember another thing.

F: Did you have a fruit cellar maybe?

G: Yes, and that's where we put it in because it was cold. Being that my father was a businessman we had the habit of going to the wholesale house and buying things by the cases--even bananas, he would buy the whole doggone thing when they were green. We always fed all the kids and everybody else. I never in my life was in want for food.

F: What kind of iron did you have?

G: We had an electric iron. It was a very heavy electric iron and the cord used to break all the time, and I learned how to fix it myself--to pull down the wires--because they were always coming apart you know, by the way you used it. Being that we girls were using it ourselves, nobody took care of anything.

F: Do you have any brothers in your family?

G: I had one.

F: Did he ever do any of the housework?

G: I wouldn't say that he did any of the housework, but he sure as heck learned how to press his clothes because no one ever wanted to do the ironing. He was a pretty good ironer. He also learned to cook because everyone went their own merry way, so we would pass the buck to one another.

After we let go of the housekeeper, we sent our clothes to the laundry. In fact, part of the time when my mother started to get too ill and the work was too much for whoever the housekeeper was, we started then already sending our clothes to the laundromat. They would pick it up and deliver it for us every week. For a long time we sent our clothes to the laundry. The girls would do their own dainty' clothes and blouses, you wouldn't send those in. Bedding, towels, and things like that. . .

F: Did you send your laundry out when you were married or did you do it at home?

G: I did it at home. I had an electric washing machine, so I did my own laundry.

F: Did your husband help you with the housework?

G: No.

F: When you first got married?

G: No, he never did. When I had my oldest daughter, which she is now forty-one, in those days they didn't have Pampers and these other diapers that we have today. So I had diaper service with her all the time until I didn't need it. When my second girl was married, by that time I already had the automatic washer and dryer.

F: When was this?

G: She was born in 1949.

F: How much easier was it to do the clothes with the automatic washer and dryer?

G: You didn't have to bother rinsing two or three times, running them through the ringer, and you had to use your hands even if it was electric. The automatic one, I had a Bendix set of twins, so you would just throw in your clothes, except for diapers which you had to rinse, then you would just throw them in.

F: Did it save you time?

G: Yes, naturally it was a timesaver, not only that, your clothes are washing, you are doing something else.

F: What else would you do? Would you do other work?

G: Yes, I always did a lot of cooking all of the time. My husband was a fussy eater and being I was a good cook, there are very few things I can't make.

F: How did you like spending time in the kitchen?

G: I like cooking, isn't that funny. I like restaurant eating, I like to go to nice restaurants, but I like to . . . I'm a slow eater and I like what I like, so I don't mind cooking. I hate doing the dishes; I would be up until 12:00 at night doing dishes.

F: Do you have a dishwasher?

G: I never got a dishwasher until after all my children left me.

F: That was when?

G: Before she got married, and they have been married now eleven years, so count back eleven and I bought it the year before . . . 1973, then I must have bought it.

Being that I was used to cooking, but being that I worked, my own daughters learned how to peel potatoes and get the salad ready, helping in that part. My husband also learned to cook for the simple reason that when we came back here to live, he had to go into working in the ironwork; he was laid off a lot, so he learned to in that way. Not only that, he learned to cook before then when he went into the liquor business. He would call me up on the telephone and ask me how to make this and that because they had to have a restaurant. He learned to cook then. He's a pretty good cook as far as that part goes. When he wasn't working, he would help me then at home. That was years after, when all the children were big and in school already. I feel, to be honest about it, to have an ideal marriage; after being married for over forty-two years, I think the husband and wife should work together.

F: I think so.

G: Give a hand to it because that's a lot better; do the dishes together.

I happen to have a son-in-law, it's a pleasure to eat in his home because he is the one who gets up and rids off the table and fills the dishwasher up. I enjoy going there to eat.

F: Do you think that is more prevalent now than it was before?

G: Yes, and I'm going to tell you one reason why it is more prevalent. In order to live the standard of living in which we have all learned to know about and all want to live in, two people have to work. When two people are working it's no more than right that you should share in the work today. I think that this is an ideal time to live, once you've tried to marry somebody with the intelligence that you find compatible to enjoy life together, to converse, or to enjoy sports together, or something else. But if you share your life and you come home when you are eating supper, I think, and discuss what both have done during that day, it shows that you have interest in one another. I think that would lead more to a happy marriage than each one going their own merry way.

F: Do you think that the appliances that have been developed in the home have kind of helped?

G: Yes and no.

F: Okay, why yes and no?

G: The more you have, the more work you have.

I will describe the kitchen we had years ago at home. We had

the gas stove, a big, long table with benches because there were always seven at the table, but we were used to eight, nine, and ten. In those days you had big kitchens that you could do that, but we had a dining room. I was brought up with a kitchen, living room, and dining room.

F: How were the appliances good or bad?

G: Because you have to clean them. Before you only had to clean the stove, wash the dishes, put them away, and that was all you had.

F: Now what do you have?

G: The old icebox didn't have much in there. You had a store around the corner, so you went shopping everyday because around every corner there was a store for the people that lived there. So you didn't have that to clean. I have two refrigerators, one in the basement, I have a stove in the basement also. I have my units upstairs in the kitchen that have to be cleaned at times. It's just more work. Now I have a den and a living room to clean that you are not using. In those days you had a parlor and you didn't use that much, except for company because everybody always visited in the kitchen.

F: That's true.

G: And they don't. My daughter always said, "Oh, mom, we always had stuff on our sink," and when my youngest daughter was in high school she said that their house is so spotless. Finally, I started waking up to the fact, "God, I spend so darn much time in this kitchen, I am forever cleaning, I am never done. There are a lot of other things I would like to do. I can't, I'm always having to rid up." Finally, after looking around and getting the few kicks in life that I've gotten, I said, "Well, what do they serve you when you go there?" She said, "Nothing," so no wonder they have a clean sink and everything because they don't give you anything. What are they going to clean? This very girl finally came to our house and she said to me, "Mrs. Galke, I know now why you have it, you people eat from the time you get up until the time you go to bed."

Our standard of living . . . Going from the standard of living that I was used to in those days, which was pretty good, was easier than today. The parlor was used when somebody special came, so you just dusted that and just ran the sweeper. The dining room was used when you really had company. You used the kitchen all the time, you lived in the kitchen, so you cleaned up the old kitchen and cleaned off the porch.

F: And that was it?

- G: That was it, and fixed the beds and that was all.
- F: These appliances that are coming out are supposed to make it easier to clean.
- G: No, because you have too much more to clean. You have much more laundry.
- F: Do you think they help in a sense?
- G: Sure, they are a big help, but again, they are a lot of work. I wouldn't do without them to be honest. The funniest part was when I got the dishwasher, finally. My husband said to me, "Boy, the best appliance I like is the dishwasher." He was helping then because I was teaching.

How I happened to get the dishwasher. . . Before then my girls used to say, "Mom, get a dishwasher." They wanted me to get a portable one, and I said that it was too much work, and it was. My sister had a portable one and I thought she could keep that thing, pushing it around, shoving it around, stopping your spigots. When I got one, I was going to remove part of my cupboards and give up cupboard space instead. They asked me when I was going to get a dishwasher and I said, "When you all leave. Right now I have live ones that have to learn how to clean and wash dishes." I went through seven sets of dishes by that time. If they had cracks in them my husband didn't want to eat from them. I bought seconds in dishes. They never did clean the pots and pans like I did. I started doing them myself now. Even a dishwasher . . . Sure it's good, but if you want your pots and pans to look nice, you have to use elbow grease.

- F: Even though the dishwasher helps you do the dishes, you still have to work because you still have to rinse them off.
- G: That's right, and the work is still there.

I will tell you what else I like about the dishwasher: sterilization of the dishes. It has prevented colds, sicknesses, and diseases. I think that that is one of the advantages of it. Remember when people boiled their clothes?

I know my children don't like some of the things I have in my home today, but I have also learned to like nice things. I tell them not to just start throwing things away; they are to call an antique dealer and you will get the money back that you paid for it, even after using it all these years. I learned that from friends of mine with broken homes. I found the ones that were wisest called the antique dealer and they had priceless pieces. I know that I have a lot of them too.

- F: You said earlier that you wouldn't want to go back to not having any of the appliances, is that right?

G: No, I wouldn't.

F: Could you do the work without these appliances today if someone took them all away?

G: Well, I would hate to tell you what my house would probably look like. I wash clothes almost everyday because we are changing . . . Our standard of living is so high, we change clothes everyday, we put on different things everyday.

F: What do you think of the comparison of the way we live now and the way we do our housework now to what it was before doing the housework? Do you think it's a lot easier?

G: I would say yes for the appliances that you can get to help you, but it still takes a lot of time because . . . I suppose if I had a small place I would say not very hard, but I still have a big home with four bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, three baths.

F: Do you think these appliances have liberated women to get out of the house because it saves time in doing the housework?

G: Yes, sure. I would say that they did.

F: Do you think that is good or bad?

G: That's good. I think it's nice that they raised the standard. Like I say, now we have learned more about living. I think we have a little more time that we can spend . . .

One thing I like and don't like is the television. I see a lot of disadvantages to that because the children are spending too much time and it's bad for their eyes, and they are not reading. Watching television has accounted for them not reading.

F: That's true.

G: I wouldn't be without it because I like the news; I like to see what is going on.

F: What is an appliance that you think is so important that was made, if you could narrow it down to one? Which is the one that has really helped you?

G: I think the automatic washer would be it, to be honest with you. I just throw in my clothes dry, put them through cold or hot water, whichever I want, I just switch buttons. The other you were using your hands and lifting. I like clothes dried outside.

F: I was just going to ask you if you dried your clothes outside.

G: I never do because I don't have a clothes line, and I've been asking my husband to put it up and he won't do it, so I dry my clothes in the basement.

I think another convenience to me would be if I had a laundry room either on the main floor or something, but I don't mind the basement. It isn't too bad for me to go down. I do think if I had one on the main floor I guess I would have two sets of that, but I don't have it.

F: Was there anything that I didn't cover, for appliances, that you can think of?

G: I would say have them because I have every one from the garbage disposal to . . . I have every one that you can name. I have tried different sweepers, I wouldn't give you \$.02 for that Kirby it was so darn heavy.

Some of the others that I like when it comes to appliances. . . I think that you really need them for the way we live today. Remember the Lord gave us knowledge so we have got to use it and make progress in our lives. Our aim is to live better than we lived before. Why is America so great? Because we are a conglomeration of a lot of races and a lot of religions. We are not interbred, we have mingled now. We had to work hard to get started, so if you start studying American history, those people sure had it tough.

F: It was worse where they came from.

G: Yes, that was it.

F: I think we've covered just about everything.

END OF INTERVIEW