

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown, Westlake Terrace

Personal Experience

O. H. 885

MARYANN GASPER

Interviewed

by

Joe Rochette

on

December 9, 1985

MARYANN GASPER

MaryAnn Gasper was born on April 18, 1943, in Youngstown, Ohio. She is the daughter of Thomas L. Allison and Katherine J. Uber. Mrs. Gasper went to school in the Youngstown area, graduating from Ursuline High School in 1962. She eventually attended Youngstown State University and received a B.S. degree in education in 1971.

Young MaryAnn, along with her parents and five brothers and sisters, lived in the Westlake Terrace Housing development for 10 years, from 1949 to 1959. Westlake Terrace was the first such development of its kind in the United States under the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937. These apartments served the needs of many families who could not afford adequate housing during the turbulent 1930s and 1940s. Westlake Terrace was another of the many New Deal programs during the Great Depression that attempted to relieve the nation's troubles during that period.

Mrs. Gasper presently lives on West South Range Road in Salem with her husband Paul, who she married on November 27, 1966. They have three children: Michelle, Denise, and Karen. Mrs. Gasper works as a substitute teacher with the Mahoning County School system. Her hobbies include crafts, farming, and sewing. She is a member of St. Patrick's Church in Leetonia.

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INTERVIEWEE: MARYANN GASPER

INTERVIEWER: Joe Rochette

SUBJECT: low income housing, inner city life (1950s)
segregation problems

DATE: December 9, 1985

R: This is an interview with MaryAnn Gasper for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Westlake Terrace, by Joe Rochette, on December 9, 1985, in Berlin Center, Ohio, at approximately 10:57 a.m.

Tell me a little bit about yourself, where you were born, early childhood, that kind of thing.

G: I was born in Youngstown. I was raised in Youngstown until I was married. We even lived in Youngstown several years after that. Up until that time my family lived in Brownlee Woods up until we moved to Westlake. I was about the age of five when we did move there. Then we lived there until I was sixteen. So you could say that I grew up mainly in this area from the age of five to sixteen.

R: Before going to Westlake specifically during the period when you were growing up, what were your impressions? What things do you remember about Youngstown generally in comparison to the way it is today or what you perceive of it being today?

G: Youngstown, even back up until the time when I got married and lived in there, it was a pretty good place to live. People were working, they had jobs, people had money, they took care of their homes. The only negative thing there was in the area down around Federal Street was called Monkey's Nest. That was a pretty bad area that people knew just to stay out of. Other than that you could go anyplace in the city you wanted to.

There were no problems about travelling and no fear of anything. I know my mother used to send me when I was no more than seven or eight years old. I would get on the bus and go downtown for her because there weren't any drugstores close by. If one of the kids would get sick, she would give me 10¢ to ride the bus. Can you imagine today sending a seven or eight year old child on a bus into a city? She had no fear, and I was never fearful. It didn't bother me in the least bit. I felt good that I could do something and that I was responsible enough that I could do it. I would go all the way downtown, go to the drugstore, give the pharmacist the prescription, wait there for him to fill it, go back out across the street, get back on the bus, and go all the way home again. There was no problem.

The impression of being raised in Youngstown. . . I had no problems about being raised in the whole area or going to the schools, no problem at all. Up until the time after I was married and we lived on the fringe of an area where they had the riots there in the early 1970's or so. . . My husband was raised in the country himself on a farm, and he wasn't quite used to this. That was the time that we decided, that we weren't going to raise our children in town. It was shortly after that that we bought our farm and we moved out of the Youngstown area.

Today I'm still involved in the Youngstown schools. I'm still a substitute teacher in the Youngstown schools. I did teach full-time in Youngstown in an inner city school on the east side. I enjoyed it immensely in the time I was there. I had no problem working with the children. I really enjoyed it. Going back into it now, it is very difficult. It is very hard. I find the children themselves are a lot harder to work with simply because I think a lot of them have a lot more problems than they had back when I was growing up there. I'm not talking about color or anything. I'm talking about just children in general. I'm talking white children as well as black children. I don't think that a lot of them have the family ties, which is important. That is the main reason right there. Nobody cares, so why should the kids care about themselves?

R: Over the years when you were growing up and you saw a lot of these changes, was downtown Youngstown, the city itself, a really bustling area?

G: Very much so. It was the only shopping area there.

There were no malls. There weren't even any large grocery stores where we lived. If you wanted to do your grocery shopping, you had to go to an area where the stores were. The only area was downtown Youngstown. There was no Southern Park Mall, Eastwood Mall. There wasn't even a Liberty Plaza, which they built later on. There was absolutely nothing. Up on Belmont Avenue there was an A & P, and that was the closest grocery store. We used to walk to it. We used to take a wagon to go to the grocery store. We never had a car, but we used to walk to it. It was a good walk. It wasn't close. Other than that it meant getting on the bus and going downtown to do whatever shopping whether it was groceries or clothes. It was a very, very much alive area. We used to just enjoy it immensely to go shopping downtown. That was the thing to do. There was no other place to go.

R: I suppose especially this time of year too that it would really be. . .The Christmas season, and there would be all kinds of. . .

G: Yes. All the stores were much decorated like the mall stores are now. It was all downtown then.

R: Let's say going downtown just for entertainment as far as going to movies or restaurants or anything. What do you remember about that?

G: We never went to restaurants. I never can vividly remember doing that mainly because we didn't have the money. Maybe other people did who could afford it, but that was something we didn't do. There weren't any McDonald's or Arby's or anything. There was nothing like that, but as far as entertainment went, mostly we entertained ourselves.

There was a movie theater out on Belmont Avenue called the Belmont Theater. It cost 5¢ on Saturday afternoons to go to the movie. We used to swipe milk bottles to get that. I can distinctly remember that, taking the milk bottles because they were 2¢ a piece deposit. Everybody had to guard their milk bottles with their life. We used to swipe them and turn them in for the deposit and try to get the 5¢ to go to the Saturday afternoon movies. They used to have a serial thing that continued. Then they would have cartoons, and then they would have movies. If we could afford to do that. . Now we didn't go a whole lot, maybe once a month even if that, but we used to try to hustle up that 5¢ some

way so that we could go. We would all go together, a whole gang of us. There must have been twelve, fifteen, maybe twenty kids from the whole area. We used to all walk up together, and we all behaved ourselves. The kids were all good. Nobody ever got out of hand. There were never any problems in the movie theater at all.

I can't really remember going downtown to a movie. I know there were theaters down there, but apparently they must have cost more than this neighborhood theater. The only other thing I can remember is that my sister and I got roller skates for Christmas when we were in fifth and sixth grades. There was a roller skating rink down there. I think it was called Mac's. We used to go down there and go roller-skating. I don't think it is there anymore. That was the only other thing we used to do, and that was enjoyable. We used to have a good time doing that.

R: I suppose they were probably crowded and everything too.

G: Very much so. The main thing we did for entertainment was the Lexington Settlement House. It was up on Lexington Avenue. It was just called the Lexington Settlement House. They had different rooms set up for different projects. One room you could play Ping-Pong. Another room was the coloring room where they had a big chalkboard. I can remember spending hours with chalk drawing on the chalkboard, coloring, making things, gluing, and pasting, all of the different things that kids still enjoy doing now. There was a library where you could go in and take out books.

I can't remember exactly what year it was, but I must have been maybe ten to twelve, somewhere in there. They put a big addition on it. Then they added a movie theater upstairs. Even before they added the addition, down in the basement they had a place where you could roller-skate too. On Friday nights you could roller-skate downstairs. It was like their auditorium there more or less then. They used to hold church services there on Sundays too.

They had a woodshop where you could work with the saws and make things. We used to make things out of wood. I can remember making a knickknack shelf for my mother one year for Christmas there. They had a kitchen where they would cook, and they also ran their own summer camp, which we went to every year out on Leffingwell Road next to the Boy Scouts' camp. We used to go to that. That

you had to pay for. It wasn't very expensive because we always got to go. We had a very good time at the camp. They didn't have a pool. We used to go over and use the Christ Mission Camp too and the Fresh Air Camp. I forget who used to run that. It was in Mill Creek Park. We used to get sent to all of the summer camps.

That was mainly recreation as far as anybody helping you do something. Other than that we made our own fun using the courtyard in the middle. We played lots of games during the summers until 10:00 or 11:00 at night. The adults would sit out on the steps just sitting and talking, keeping an eye on the kids, and we would play games like hide-and-seek for hours upon hours. You didn't worry about the kids. The kids were all there. Everybody played together, and everybody had a good time. They were a lot of good positive thoughts, not too many negative thoughts, not until later on when things started to change up to the point where we did finally move.

R: When you were there growing up, did they have those shower things that were like a fountain or something?

G: Yes, they did. We didn't have any right in our court. They had the one behind the settlement house. They had a large one. We used to go up there in the summer. That was free. They had the swimming pool across the street, but you had to pay 5¢ in the afternoon. We used to go for the free swim in the morning and freeze because it was free. We didn't often have too many nickels to go in the afternoon. That was what we called it. We would run in and out and around that all the time. That was a lot of fun. It was quite large. It wasn't small. It was a quite large area. It had a high rim around it. It was nice. The water would drain back down in. Yes, it was nice.

R: When you were going to the settlement house during those years, people we have talked to earlier have said that there was a small membership or something.

G: There was a membership fee. We never paid it. We never had the money to pay it, but somehow we managed to get in anyway. I think it was 50¢ a year or something. I can never remember paying it. I don't think my mother had the money to pay it. I think you were supposed to, but I don't think they really checked too much.

R: Would kids who lived in the area also go?

G: Anybody. It wasn't just for the children who lived in the housing projects. It was for anybody in the area, people who lived north of us who lived in regular homes like Brier Hill; anybody could use it. I suppose other children did, but we just mainly associated with the kids who we lived with. We didn't have a whole lot to do with a lot of the kids who didn't live right there. That was our neighborhood mainly because we weren't allowed to go anyplace else. We were only allowed to go so far to play where my mother would permit us, and that was it. She was very strict.

R: Did the settlement house have a director or volunteers who would run the programs?

G: There was an office, which I believe was where the director was. I can't remember. Vaguely I remember there was somebody who ran the place, but then each of the rooms had like a supervisor or a teacher in it. You could just go in. There was somebody there. If you wanted to color, there were crayons and there was paper to color on. Around Christmas there were the paper chains and the paper lanterns, all of that stuff, coloring dittos with the pictures on them.

Then they had the room with the ping-pong, with the ping-pong tables in it and that, but mostly the big boys were in there. We smaller kids didn't have much of a chance to get into that room. Sometimes we would squeeze in up against the wall. It was always crowded and the bigger boys would be playing. You could watch, but the smaller kids never had any chance to play.

They had a small room like a concession room where they had pop. You could buy pop. They had a gumball machine and a candy machine. I can't remember buying too much in there. Maybe sometimes I had a penny for the gumball machine, and that would be about it. I really can't remember buying much in there. I think they had potato chips and things like that that you could buy, but I can't remember ever buying anything like that.

They had a coatroom. You would come in the main entrance and you would walk right into the concession room. It was right at the top. You would go up a couple of steps. Then you would go to the right, and then right on the left there there was the coatroom. The office was right across from it. Down the hall further were the rooms where the kids were permitted. If you would come in the main door and you would go to the

left, the library was down there. Then they had another room that they used. . . I don't know how often, but a doctor or a nurse would come. They would check the children and give injections, that type of thing. That was pretty much it. Down in the basement there was a room where it was the workroom where the kids could go and work on wood projects. They had a kitchen down there too for certain things.

I can remember when you got a little older on Friday nights it cost 50¢, and they would rent a bus and take you down to the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) to swim. I think it was like twice a month during the winter. Then we would come back and they would fix hot chocolate or something down in the kitchen. You would get something before you went home. Sometimes they would even have something else to eat for the kids when they came back from swimming. They used to do that a couple of times a month. You could go if you had the money to go. It was 50¢. That was quite a bit of money. We didn't go too often. We used to really, really enjoy it when we could go. That was a real treat in the winter to go swimming.

R: In talking to other people too, the people who grew up there at Westlake. . . If you were a kid, then you almost had more things to do than a kid who lived anywhere else. With the settlement house there you had all kinds of activities that you could get involved in.

G: It was. My mother, of course, had chores for us to do at home. We always had jobs and you had to have it done. Once it was done, it was your free time. You could go outside and play or go to the settlement house. There was always something going on, always something to do. We never got into trouble.

They broke it down into ages on Saturdays. The different age you were, then you went into that group. I was glad to get away from my younger sisters and brothers since there were so many of us. I was the oldest one and I was responsible for the other ones. If anything ever happened to them, if they got hurt or into trouble, I was in trouble. I knew there I could kind of turn them loose and they could go into their own age group. They would be fine and I, in turn, could enjoy myself. It was a real positive type atmosphere and everything. You just had a good time. I suppose they probably do most of the same things now. I think it is still there.

- R: Yes. Did the adults ever have any kind of activities?
- G: I can't remember anything. I can't remember my mother doing anything or them doing anything for the adults at all. They started having movies, which was more of a family thing.
- R: When they would have movies, it would be your family.
- G: Yes, the whole family could come. That was mainly on Friday nights. I think the parents were invited to come then too, but I don't ever really remember my mother going. I can remember her telling us. . .It would be late Friday night when the movie would be over maybe 10:00. It would always be after dark. I remember her telling us to make sure that we walked home in a group. That would be about it.
- R: Aside from the settlement house, what are some earlier memories about Westlake in conjunction with your apartment where you lived or the routine or anything like that?
- G: Routine as far as daily life?
- R: Yes, things during the day that you remember. People have told us about the trouble they had with the garbage, just anything.
- G: As far as the garbage goes, one time they tried trash and tried to collect it at everybody's house. I know that didn't work for some reason or another. Then they just had the big dumpsters which they set out in the parking lot. That was a fun place to root through. We would climb down in them to see what we could find that was of some value. I can remember that. I know I go by there occasionally. There is one school I go to not too far from there. I go up Wirt Street. The dumpsters are still there, but anytime I go by the dumpsters now they are always overflowing. There is trash all laying around on the ground and things like that. It was never like that when we lived there.

The place was maintained very, very well. The people who lived there had so much work that they had to do themselves. You had to mow the grass. If you didn't mow the grass, you had to pay so much, which I can't ever remember anybody mowing the grass. There was so much of it, and they only gave you a push mower to use. I tried one time. I wanted to earn some money. I went

to a lady. I asked her, "If I do it, will you pay me what you would have to pay?" She said, "Okay, sure." Here I am a little, skinny kid of thirteen and I'm going to mow all of that grass with a push mower. I got maybe one-third of it done, and I quit. There was no way I could finish. I was too tired.

Then the people had to. . . I don't know how often it was that you had to do it, but then there was where you had to police the grounds and clean up any trash. Maybe that was a couple of times a year. If you didn't do it, an added total was added onto your rent. They would inspect it. I think it was only a couple of dollars or something like that. I can remember my mother sending all six of us out to patrol the area to pick up. Each of us had a paper bag going out. Any tin cans or anything we had to get and deposit them in the dumpsters.

Also so many times a year on a rotation basis, you had to clean the washroom where we did the laundry at. You either had the washroom to do or you had the drying rooms to do, which meant you had to hose the whole thing down and sweep it up. If there was anything out laying around that shouldn't have been, you had to put it away. Everything had to be done, cleaned up, which was a good policy. It really was. It kept the place looking pretty decent, and they didn't have to hire somebody else to do it.

If you didn't do it, then the maintenance department would do it. They had one person who inspected everything once a week, and that was the fellow who lived not far from us. That was his job. I don't know if he was paid so much or so much was taken off of his rent. He also put the flag up and down in front of the office building. That was his job. He did that too. He went around because I know on a couple of Saturdays I would tag after him. He did it on Saturday morning because the washers had to be cleaned Friday nights or Saturday mornings. He would inspect them to make sure that they were done. The work did have to be done. If it wasn't you were fined or it was added onto your rent.

As far as any of the other things that needed to be done the maintenance department did it, and they did a good job. All you had to do was to contact them, which meant you had to walk over to the maintenance department and tell them. They were good with the kids. If the kids had broken toys or bikes. . . Or how many times they

welded an old wagon that we had or put parts on it and fixed it for us kids. They were really good. They did a lot for the kids who did live there. I can remember pulling the wagon. Where the main bolt used to go in, it was rusted and it would break away. They kept welding it and putting a big washer in it and weld it and fix it for us. That was the only thing that we really had. It was really important for us to use it because we used to go for groceries with it; we needed it.

R: At that time was the maintenance building behind where the office is at?

G: It wasn't far from where we lived. We lived right off of Madison. It was right across Madison. There is still a building there where Overall & Supply Company. . It was a commercial laundry. They washed uniforms and men's coveralls. We just called it the Overall Company.

R: Yes, it is still there.

G: It wasn't too far from there. It wasn't right behind the offices, no. It was right back there by the Overall & Supply Company. There was a building right there. That was where it was located. I don't know if it is still there or not.

R: Would the maintenance people be the ones to deal with problems like plumbing or something like that?

G: Yes. You would go ahead and walk over there. If you didn't have a phone, you could just walk over. You would tell them that you were having a trouble with your plumbing or if something was leaking or if the heat wasn't working right or something like that. They would come over if your sink was plugged or something like if the toilet was backed up. They would come and they would fix it.

I know they checked things periodically. I don't know what was up in the attic section, but we had like a trapdoor in ours. It was the only one in the building. Each building had one. Periodically they would go up there and check. I don't know what they were checking, what was up there. They would come to the house and take a ladder and climb up in that crawl space up above there with a flashlight and check.

Periodically they would do the same thing with. . . I

guess the electric wires ran down underneath the building because they would do the same thing. I remember one time one of the fellows left the one door open, and we kids got in there and crawled. We weren't supposed to; I know that, but we did. Something was down underneath.

R: In those days people had responsibilities that they had to do and everything seemed to run very smoothly.

G: Yes, everything seemed to. They had a good system. If you had any problems, you called the maintenance department. I know when somebody moved out of an apartment, it was completely painted with the same yellow paint; every room, every apartment building with the same yellow paint, was painted yellow. They would come in and completely paint the whole apartment before the new tenants would move into it.

That would be about the only time it was painted. They didn't come in if you were living there and paint. They would give you the paint and tell you that if you wanted it painted, then you painted it. I can remember them sometimes giving my mother paint. We lived there a good while, and I can remember us painting, but you had to use their yellow paint.

You weren't allowed to put any nails. . .Some people did. They would have periodic inspections. They would come in and inspect the apartments. If you had a nail or something in the wall, you had to remove it. You weren't allowed.

You bought your own linoleum. They didn't supply it because the floors were all cement. They furnished nothing other than the stove and the refrigerator and that was it. Everything else was your own, whatever you put down in the apartment yourself.

R: The stoves and the refrigerators would work pretty good.

G: They worked. They weren't big by far. The refrigerator wasn't a refrigerator like you think today. It was a short, little round thing, and it had a freezer space in it for ice cubes, and that was it. Maybe you could get a little bit of ice cream in it if you took the ice cube trays out. They weren't very big, but they were adequate. It was the same with the stoves. It was a four burner stove with a small oven. It wasn't very big, but it was adequate.

R: Were there problems with neighbors? Could you hear noises or anything like that?

G: Yes. If neighbors did talk loudly or fight mostly, you could hear the neighbors. That was one problem that there was. You could very well hear. With us kids we would take a glass and stick it up to the wall while the neighbors were fighting and try to listen to hear what they were saying.

R: Did it give you a feeling of being crowded or cramped or anything like that?

G: No, not really, I think simply because we were little. We were quite young and quite little. I don't ever remember us feeling cramped or crowded. We could very well possibly have been, but it never bothered me. We spent a lot of time outside. That was probably it. We played outside. We didn't play in the house too much.

R: In the years you spent there what were changes while you were there that you saw taking place from your earliest memories to right when you moved?

G: I knew when we first moved in there that they were still working on the place quite a bit. I can remember when they planted the trees. Then I can remember when they tried to get grass to grow. They seeded the whole place. This must have been either 1949 or 1950. It was one of the very earliest memories when I was quite small because I can remember them planting the trees, seeding the place, putting the straw down, then trying to get the grass to grow.

Then I can remember when I was very little, they used to have swings, sliding board, monkey bars right in our own courtyard. Apparently too many kids must have gotten hurt unsupervised. I remember they removed them all, everything. Sliding boards came down. They came in with their welding torches and they took them down. The only thing they left was the basketball hoop. That they did leave, but everything else they took down.

Then they did fence off the courtyard area where we played. They put up a fence when they seeded the grass. We didn't really like that because it meant you had to jump the fence when you were playing ball. So when you hit a home run, you had to jump the fence and go after it. I remember them doing that as far as physical changes.

As far as any other changes I remember when segregation came in. The bottom part below Madison, south of Madison, that was the balck section. They had their own playground. In fact we always thought their playground was nicer. We used to try to sneak down there and play. My mother would never permit us. If we ever went down there, we got a good spanking when we got home. They had the merry-go-round that went around, which we didn't have. We thought that was great. We used to try to sneak down there and play. It wasn't fear of anything happening to us other than getting in trouble when we got home that kept us from going down there.

Then later on when they started to integrate the apartments, a few families moved in. There was no problem. There were a couple of girls in one family and a couple of boys in another family that I can remember. I can distinctly remember the two when they first moved in, and they lived there a good while before they moved anybody else in. There was no problem. It was later on when they started to move a lot of people in. The blacks began to bunch together. They didn't play with the white kids as much. They started to run with their own gangs and started to beat kids up. That was how it was later on. At first when they started to integrate, there weren't very many of them. We were friendly. The kids all played together. We had a good time together. There was no problem. Later on when there were more of them, they organized their own street gangs. That was the big thing, going out and beating up white kids. That was when it got bad, and that was when my mother decided that we would move. Up until that point it was a good place to live. I can't remember any real bad memories of anything.

R: When the integration started, do you remember maybe a lot of white families like a lot of times doing the white flight thing? Did people start to move out?

G: No, they didn't, no. I can't remember that. Just that when a family would move out and an apartment was empty, they would move a black family into it. At first I think some of the people felt kind of miffed that they moved another black one in, but as long as the families were halfway decent people and the kids behaved. . .

All the kids played together. I can't remember anyone. . .Most of the kids in the first court played with kids in the first court. Most of the kids in the second court played with the kids in the second court. That was about it. When the black kids moved in, we were

friendly with them, and we played with them. I can't remember any of us having any problems with any of the black kids in our court. There were problems with a few white kids who were pretty nasty, but not any of the black kids. We did have some characters; don't get me wrong. They weren't black either; they were white. You learned what kids you could associate with and what kids to stay away from because they were troublemakers.

When we lived there, there was one little carry-out store up on Griffith Street. This one boy and another one who lived down below us and some other kids went in and robbed the place. In the process they were caught. One of the kids broke a pop bottle and blinded the proprietor of the store. He was blinded. I can remember the investigation. I can remember them really trying to find out who did it. They did catch the kids; I know that. I went to Ursuline one year with the one boy, my freshman year.

A lot of good people came out of there too. They had their bad people and they had their good people. A lot of good people came out of there. I think it all dealt with the families. It has an awful lot to do with the families, the family life, the same as today with discipline and what you expect out of children. I don't think that changes no matter where you live.

R: When we first started talking about when you were younger and you said your mother could send you on the bus, by the time you moved out, that had started to change.

G: No. From my freshman year in high school my grandfather was ill and I was sent to live with my grandmother to help her. After my grandfather passed away I came home. I was home for about maybe six or eight months. Then I got a job working for another family at the end of my sophomore year in high school. I lived with the family. They were a Jewish family who had eight children. It was then that we moved. My mother decided then that it was getting bad. We moved. This family said, "Why don't you stay here with us?" I wanted to continue going to school where I was going to school. We were going to have to change schools. So my last two years of high school, I lived with this family until I graduated. Up until I was sixteen I lived there, but then once I turned sixteen and got this job, I didn't even know if my family was still there. I lived with this other family.

It was starting to get bad. It really was. When I worked for this family, I used to take the bus. I used to walk over to Elm Street. I used to walk over Madison Avenue. That area was getting rough too right in there. Then they didn't let me take the bus home at night and walk. They used to drive me home at night; they wouldn't let me walk home. I used to get there on my own because my mother didn't want me walking up through the housing projects and up through that area. She didn't want me walking the whole way, so I used to take the bus part of the way. But it was starting to get bad then.

I think what concerned her was us three girls, but then a lot of the boys were getting a lot rougher. My brothers were growing up, and she was trying to raise three boys by herself without a husband, boys without a father. She didn't want them turning into juvenile delinquents like some of the kids were. She wanted to get us out of that area. It was good up until then. I would say up until about 1960, 1959 it was a halfway, good, decent place to live up until then. Then things just started to change.

R: When you were at Ursuline too, you noticed that the stigma started about living at the projects.

G: Yes. When we were children growing up, no. We went to St. Ann's. The majority of the children went to Covington School. When we all came home from school, we all played with one another. There was no problem about what school you went to or what church you went to, none whatsoever. We had our own friends.

At elementary school I think some of the kids kind of looked down on us because we lived in the projects. There was some of that, not a great point, but there was from some of them who lived further up on Brier Hill. They kind of looked down, but when we went to Ursuline, it was very, very evident. I think they even looked down on other kids who didn't live in the projects. It was their own little clique. Whatever group in grade school you came from was the group you kind of stayed together with in high school.

I met some other friends who lived in different areas. In fact the one girl and I are still friends to this day, very good, close friends. She lived up just a little bit further on the north side. We just met our freshman year there in high school because a lot of the kids wouldn't associate with her either.

The majority of the kids came from St. Edward's parish there. They were all in one clique and they all kind of stuck together. They ran things. I had to work after school. I didn't have time to get too much involved with the extracurricular activities. The other kids didn't have to worry about paying tuition, which we did.

R: Overall, thinking back about that period when you lived at the projects, what are your memories or feelings about the time you had spent there?

G: As far as the time I spent there, it was a good place when I was younger to raise children. The kids always had something to do. There was always somebody to play with, always something to do. We used to be outside all the time like I said doing something with somebody.

I can't ever really remember anybody in our group of friends really getting in trouble with the police or being a juvenile delinquent or doing things like malicious damage to property or anything. I think about the worst thing we used to do was in the spring we used to cross the street to this house. The people had a beautiful hedge that grew real straight sticks, and we used to make our own bows and arrows. That was the perfect place to get the arrows. We used to sneak over there and swipe a couple of the hedges. I already mentioned about swiping milk bottles. We never really hurt anybody or ever really did anything wrong.

It was a good group of kids to be growing up with. The bad ones--I mentioned a few of them--you just avoided. You learned to stay away from them. But most of the kids were pretty decent, and everybody played together and had a good time. We all went up to the settlement house together in a group. Everybody walked home in a group. Anytime you went to the movies on Saturday everybody went as a group and everybody came home as a group. Nobody got out of hand; nobody got rowdy. There was no writing on the bathroom walls or throwing toilet paper around. Nobody ever really did anything that they weren't supposed to. The kids were pretty decent kids.

R: Okay. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW