

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Westlake Terrace Project

Personal Experience

O.H. 908

ROMIE V. MOGA

Interviewed

by

Evelyn Mangie

on

October 15, 1985

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ROMIE V. MOGA

INTERVIEWER: Evelyn Mangie

SUBJECT: Westlake Terrace construction, life in the
1930s and 1940s in Youngstown and Chicago,
Al Capone, Dillinger, prohibition, how
Youngstown used to be, cost of living in
Westlake Terrace

DATE: October 15, 1985

EM: This is an interview with Romie Moga for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Westlake Terrace project, by Evelyn Mangie, on October 15, 1985, at 148 Lauderdale Avenue, at 4:20 p.m.

Start from the very beginning. Were you born in Youngstown?

RM: No, I was born in Aurora, Illinois.

EM: When did you come to Youngstown?

RM: I came to Youngstown in the spring of 1937.

EM: What do you remember about that?

RM: I came to marry my wife. Basically, I met her and I came to Youngstown to get married. We got married in October of 1937.

EM: She was a native of Youngstown?

RM: Yes, more or less. She graduated from East High School in 1932.

EM: What was Youngstown like then?

RM: [It was] more or less the good old days. They had trolley cars. The East end of Youngstown was really booming. The East end of town was primarily for the foreign element. That is, the Slovaks, Hungarians. They had stores that you don't see today. They had livestock and poultry. You picked them out and you took them home. You fed them for a week or so, and then you butchered them and made your soup or stew or whatever. Some things were bought in bulk in barrels; buying coffee and dry fruits and so on. Your meat markets were butchers with sawdust on the floor and the meat was hanging up.

When I came here in 1937, that was just when the Sheet & Tube strike was going on. That was when they had the riots down on Poland Avenue. That's when steel mills were just beginning to organize a union. There was plenty of commotion between labor and management back in 1937. Of course, I worked for Carnegie Steel in Gary, Indiana before I came here in 1936, which was nonunionized at the time.

When the war broke out, I worked for a finance company which at that time was a white collar job. At the time, I was married and had three children. We got married in 1937 and we had children when the war broke out. I was called to go do defense work go in the service. So, I chose General Fireproofing which was making aircrafts during the war. That was 1942 and 1943.

That's when I moved into the projects. I moved into the project, I believe, in 1942, because I had my application early. I was one of the first tenants to move into the projects. When that project opened up. . . . Madison Avenue going south was the dividing line.

EM: Of what?

RM: The Whites lived north of it and and the colored families lived south of it.

EM: [Was it an] unwritten law accepted by everybody?

RM: Oh, yes. That was the way they stayed segregated at that time. Of course, they had us segregated in the Navy, too, when I went in in 1944. In boot camp, we were segregated.

We moved in there in 1942. We had one bedroom upstairs. They furnished all the utilities. I think our rent started at \$16

a month. That included all of the utilities: gas, electric and heat.

EM: How about the telephone?

RM: Telephone was optional. That was extra. You had to pay for your own telephone. After a while, they went according to your income.

EM: That was how they figured your rent?

RM: Oh, yes. Of course, with the income back in those days, \$15 a week was a pretty fair-paying job. I remember that I got a raise by working for Domestic Finance Corporation, and when I got the raise, I had to report it. Then they raised it to \$19 a month.

EM: Did you have a family by the time you moved in?

RM: Oh, yes, my last child, my daughter, was born in 1945, and my first child, my oldest boy, was born in 1940. Then another boy was born in 1943. We moved out of the project in 1946 after the war.

As far as Youngstown was concerned, Youngstown was booming. There were a lot of mills here. A lot of activity. You could here the steel mills operating around the clock. They worked three shifts then. You could see the smoke. You could see the blast furnace. They'd light up the whole city of Youngstown. You could see the glare of the blast furnaces. The town was full of smoke. I would have to say we had the smoke, but we had a lot of people working then. Back in 1937 when I came to Youngstown, the population was 180,000.

EM: That was a good-sized town.

RM: Yes, I understand they lost about 30,000 or 40,000. They lost quite a few tax payers.

EM: In those days, it was really going good.

RM: Oh, yes. Food was cheap. Naturally, your income went down. Butter was 19 cents a pound. Bread was 8 or 10 cents a loaf. To get ahead, I worked two jobs. I worked at General Fireproofing. After the war, I got a job at Republic Rubber in the main office in the sales department. Then, I worked at A&P in the meat department. I bought this house where I am now in 1945.

EM: Is this where you came when you left the project, when you left Westlake?

RM: Yes, I had this house rented for one year before we moved in. We paid \$6,200 for this house. Payments were \$15 or \$20 a month. Things were really down. A dollar was worth a dollar, but people worked hard and they had a lot of pride. As far as the generation was concerned. . . . It was quite different than it is now. In fact, my daughter has got two teenage girls. She's ready to pull her hair out. My older son's a doctor of dentistry. He's in SanDiego. He's been there for 20-some years. He come out of Vietnam in 1965 and he opened his practice in SanDiego. So, if there's anything in particular you'd like to know. . . .

EM: Well, tell me about the projects. What were they like? Were the rooms comfortable?

RM: The project was absolutely comfortable, yes. They were brand new. You had steam heat which is. . . . You can't beat steam heat. It had facilities. They had their laundry room in one of the buildings, centralized.

EM: Did you use it?

RM: Oh, yes, we bought our own washing machine, but they had laundry rooms where you could go down and wash your clothes. They had facilities where you could hang them up in the wintertime.

EM: In the summertime, were you allowed to hang them outside?

RM: I'm pretty sure they had facilities to hang them out in the summertime. They were very convenient. They were very economical, very convenient. As far as crime, we didn't have it. We could leave our door unlocked all night. We didn't have to worry about crimes or things of that nature.

EM: You had nice neighbors?

RM: Very nice people. [They were] very friendly, very congenial. You knew your neighbors and we helped each other out. It was a very, very nice time for raising a family. It was very easy to raise a family.

EM: Were they all families?

RM: Yes. There were widows in there with daughters or divorcees with children. We had a neighbor who had a child and she was divorced. I know it was based on income whether you were a widow or retired or. . . .

EM: Was it hard to get into?

RM: Yes, it was very difficult to get into. I put my application in way early. I had to wait several months before I got in. Yes, it was difficult to get into that project. People wanted to get in there real bad. It was something if you lived in that project.

EM: You came in 1937. Were you aware of it going up when it was under construction?

RM: Yes. I saw that they started construction there in 1939. I knew what it was. Mr. Paul Strait was the administrator or superintendent of the project. [He was] an elderly gentleman. He was a very nice man. The main office was on the corner of Madison and Federal. That was the main office of the project. You went down there every month and paid your rent at the office.

EM: You had to go to the office to pay the rent?

RM: Oh, yes. You went there every month to the office to make your rent payments. That was the headquarters. If anything went bad or any maintenance or any problem, we would just go down to the office and let them know what the problem was, and they would take care of it. There was no problem.

EM: They didn't give you a hard time?

RM: No.

EM: They had maintenance people?

RM: Oh, yes.

EM: Those are really well-built.

RM: They are well-constructed, believe me. They were built to last. The floors are concrete, reinforced concrete. The windows are made of steel. They were fireproof. They are just brick, mortar, and steel. The only thing that could burn was your furniture, your personal belongings.

EM: That was all your own personal things.

RM: Oh, yes. They were unfurnished, yes. You furnished it with your own furniture.

EM: Did you see any of the construction when they were going up?

RM: Yes, I watched the bricklayers; I watched the electricians; I watched the plumbers. I watched all of the tradesmen. It was quite a project. I don't recall how long it was, but it took quite a while because quite a few buildings went up at that

time. I didn't keep track. I would have liked to have kept a diary of how long it took. I didn't think it would be a historic project. I understand that they moved some of them.

EM: Yes, when they put in the Madison Avenue expressway.

RM: When they put in the Madison Avenue expressway, they moved those big buildings. It was something to move.

EM: They moved eleven of them. They barely cracked the plaster. That is how well-built they are.

RM: I saw them move them.

EM: Oh, you watched them move them?

RM: Oh, yes.

EM: Can you tell me about that?

RM: It was a unique way they moved those buildings. They had a system that was just unbelievable with the way they jacked them up and put them on these dollies and just rolled them over. They just pulled them over. It was quite a project, yes.

EM: Do you remember how long that took?

RM: No, I don't recall the exact date with the time element involved in moving those buildings.

EM: But it took a good time.

RM: It took quite a while, yes. That was a pretty big project, yes.

EM: Do you remember reading things in the newspaper? Let's go back to when they were first building it.

RM: As I understand--I didn't get to see her--Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt came to town. I knew she was in town. The time she was in town, I wasn't able to see her. I think she went downtown. They had a little reception for her. She came to Youngstown to more or less look the grounds over, I believe. It had to do with the project if my memory serves me right. Did you hear anything?

EM: They got a picture of her coming out of one of the . . .

RM: Yes. It was in the paper. It was in the [Youngstown] Vindicator that she was in town.

EM: Did the Vindicator make a big splash?

RM: Yes. In fact, he was in town, too, when he was campaigning.

EM: He was?

RM: Yes. He was in Youngstown when he was campaigning. See, I voted for him, if I recall correctly, his second term. I voted for him twice. He was elected three times, you know.

EM: Yes.

RM: I could only vote for him twice because I don't think I was 21 years old.

EM: The first time?

RM: The first time. I think he ran in 1933, if I'm not mistaken.

EM: I think you're right.

RM: I think it was 1933. At that time, I just come out of high school, but my 1937 I was 23 years old. I was old enough to vote for him, which I did. I voted for him in the second term and the third term.

EM: Was the feeling around the country, or at least the people you knew, for Roosevelt?

RM: Oh, yes. For all the terms he ran as President of the United States, kids that were in high school don't remember any other president than FDR. He was it. In fact, when I come out of high school in 1932, he organized the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps--during the Depression. Jobs just weren't available. People were actually starving. I don't have to tell you some people were starving. Eating out of garbage cans. Oh, yes. It was really tough. So, I enlisted in the CCC.

EM: Did you really?

RM: Yes ma'am. You got three square meals a day. You got a dollar a day, \$30 a month and \$25 of that money was sent to our parents. We kept \$5 for spending money.

EM: or the whole month?

RM: Oh, yes. That money was to keep the family going at home. That was to support the family. I had brothers and sisters at home and that money went to my parents. I only got \$5 a month. It lasted.

EM: Did you have a choice? Did you have to send it back to your family?

RM: Oh, yes. That was a must. It was mailed directly to the parents and we only got \$5 out of \$30 a month income.

EM: Well, tell me about that. That's interesting. Where were you?

RM: Well, I was stationed in. . . . First, I went to Jefferson. That's East St. Louis, Missouri. That was the old Army post down there. That was the old Army post from World War I. They had World War I vehicles there. They were called Liberty trucks. [They had] canvas tops and four or five people would sit in the cab.

EM: In the cab?

RM: In the cab. That's how wide they were. They were used during World War I. They were hard rubber wheels. They weren't pneumatic, hard rubber wheels. They were powered with chain. Chain driven. It took two guys to crank that sucker, to get it started.

My dad had a grocery store and I knew how to drive a truck. We had a delivery truck during the Depression and I took a driver's test for a company truck driver. I got the job. They issued us a brand new truck. It was a Chevrolet truck. Then I was a company truck driver. I'd drive the lieutenant around. After we moved camp to Jefferson--we were there for a few weeks then from there they shipped us to another camp in Illinois, right along the shores of the Mississippi River. We had our camp there before we built the barracks. We were out in tents. We could see the Mississippi River boats floating down the river.

EM: The big paddleboats?

RM: The paddleboats. It was something to see at night with the lights lit. You could hear the music and they were dancing aboard the boat. So, I did have my wish. I saved enough money and we had weekends off--Saturday and Sunday. A bunch of us fellows from camp, from our company, would board a ship and we had a ball. We danced on the deck and the moon. . . . It was really something.

EM: Did they have a live band?

RM: Oh yeah. Big band. That's when they had the big band era--back in the 30s.

EM: Was there any big names playing on the boat?

RM: I don't recall big name bands, but I do know that I danced to many a big ones in Chicago, because my hometown was only 38 miles from Chicago. That was my stomping ground. That's when I dated my wife and took her to the Trianon in Chicago.

EM: The Trianon?

RM: Yeah, they had the Black Hawk, the Trianon, the Aragon. Wayne King was a steady big band at the Aragon.

EM: Those are ballrooms?

RM: Oh, those are all famous ballrooms. Tommy Dorsey was there and Clyde McCoy and all those old-time band leaders. That was the hub of the United States--Chicago--for the big band era. They had their base camp more or less. That was during the Al Capone. I had been . . . when they had the shooting. The Valentine's Day shooting.

EM: Do you remember that?

RM: Oh, yes.

EM: Where were you?

RM: I was 30 miles from Chicago at the time, but we were so close we could . . . our local newspaper carried [everything]. He was quite a man.

EM: What was the feeling about him?

RM: He was notorious, but in fact, he helped poor people. He was very generous with his money when it comes to feeding and helping the poor. He didn't bother the poor people. He just had control of the prohibition. He was running whiskey out of Canada. It was illegal to sell whiskey or beer, but back in them days before prohibition, even my folks made home made beer, home brew. People made their own beer and even made their own whiskey. It was illegal, but hey, how are you going to stop it? So, FDR come to the conclusion that you couldn't stop it, so he made it legal. That's when the President of the United States said that it was permissible to buy your whiskey and beer in stores. But, yes, I remember quite a bit. Not only him, but Dillinger was quite famous at the time.

EM: Frank Dillinger? Was he in Chicago at the time?

RM: Yes. And he happened to date a lady who happened to be related to my wife's girlfriend. She lived in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania. And she was the lady in red.

EM: That was the lady in red?

RM: That was the lady in red. That was my wife's girlfriend's aunt.

EM: Do you remember her name?

RM: I can't recall off hand. My memory doesn't serve me right. Eventually, I'll think of it. She was Romanian and she was deported, you know.

EM: Oh, no. I didn't. [She was deported] after this. . . ?

RM: After she turned Dillinger in. . . . She put the thing on Dillinger. When they come out of the movie in Chicago, they shot him and killed him. But, in as much as he was involved in the big time gangsters, racketeering, her life was at stake. So, the Federal Government gave her money to leave the country. They paid her way to Romania, because her life wasn't too safe in this country.

EM: Has anybody ever heard from her since?

RM: No, she went to Romania and retired.

EM: Just disappeared.

RM: Changed her name. The Federal Government worked with her to get her out of the country before she was shot. Because they were going after her, his gang.

EM: What was the feeling about it? Were the people glad that she turned him in or. . . ?

RM: In a way, you had pros and cons, you know. She did put the finger on Dillinger.

EM: Some people thought she shouldn't have done it?

RM: Some people thought it wasn't the right thing to do and other people thought it was. She turned him in. That was back in the 1930s, also.

EM: Chicago is far from here. What was your wife . . . what were they doing in Chicago? You said you met your wife in Chicago.

RM: I met my wife in Warren, Ohio.

EM: What were you doing in Warren, then?

RM: My uncle happened to be. . . . He had a barber shop in Warren. I came out to visit him in 1933 and I went to a dance on a Saturday evening. I met her at a dance and we corresponded for four years. Back and forth. Of course, she

stayed in Youngstown and I went back to Illinois to Aurora. We corresponded and in 1937, we decided to get married. So, I came here and got married. We've been together since. It's 47 years. I was 23 years old when I came here in 1937. I have been here ever since. It has been about 47 or 48 years.

EM: That is almost as old as the project. You moved here just about. . . .

RM: Yes, the project started two years after I moved here and stayed here, yes.

EM: That has to be a big building project.

RM: Very big. It was something, something to watch, something to see being constructed.

EM: Did they play it up big in the newspapers?

RM: Oh, yes, it was [big].

EM: Did they show the progress?

RM: The progress, [they showed] how it was progressing. It was something really to watch. It was a pleasure to live in those projects. They were clean, neat, new, comfortable, warm, and reasonable. It was \$16 a month to start with, and that wasn't too bad.

EM: Nice neighbors?

RM: Very nice people, very nice neighbors, yes. Like I said, the dividing line was Madison Avenue, but we had no problems with racial problems. Even back in the 1930s, we had no racial problems. Even when I went to high school, we had colored, but we never had that feeling. I had very good colored friends. Very nice people.

EM: There was no problems.

RM: No way.

EM: How about Westlake? Was there an exchange of visits and friendliness?

RM: People just roamed around freely. There was no limitation of where you could go and who you could talk to. You could do what you wanted to. Like I said, the dividing line was south of Madison Avenue.

EM: Who decided that?

RM: I don't really know how that came about. I never did look into it, but there was no animosity; there was no dissention. Half of the project was colored and half was white. We had no problem.

EM: Do you remember the number of the unit that you lived in?

RM: [It was] 151 Wirt Street, right on the corner. It was the last building. In fact, I had my choice. I had my pick of the apartment.

EM: Because you were one of the first?

RM: One of the first, right.

EM: Do you remember the day you moved in? What day was it?

RM: We moved in there in the spring of 1942, if I'm not mistaken.

EM: They were completed probably in 1940.

RM: Yes, they were completed in 1940, yes.

EM: So, then they weren't fully filled.

RM: No, because people were being screened. You had the qualifications. Income was one factor. Yes, I had my choice. I don't know why.

EM: How many different kinds of apartments [were there]? You had a one bedroom.

RM: Yes, they had one bedroom, two bedroom, and three bedrooms. It depended on the size of your family.

EM: Was the price different?

RM: Very small. It was only a couple of dollars a month. It wasn't that much different, but there was a difference in the two bedroom, three bedroom apartments.

EM: I read about the landscaping and I have been up there. They have those playgrounds. Were your children old enough to take part in the . . . ?

RM: They had a centralized paved area where the kids could play. They had basketball hoops. Yes, my oldest son played there. He played on that playground, there. Yes, they had playgrounds. Of course, they were scattered in different areas. They had one playground for so many buildings. That was the way they were assigned. They liked to play there.

EM: How about the community building? Did you use that at all?

RM: They had a community building there right on Lexington Aveune, right in the center of the project there between Griffith and Wirt Street.

EM: Did you use that?

RM: We used it, yes.

EM: How? Tell me about that.

RM: I wasn't so much active in the community center. My wife was. I was active in Red Cross during the war. First aid. We had air raid shelters. We were being trained for first aid, Red Cross and then we had the air raid shelters. Air raid sirens, drills. The project had air raid shelters. I don't recall just where they were at, but we had good size buildings for air raid shelters. If I'm not mistaken, I think the community center building was one of them. Periodically, they would blow the air raid sirens. They still do. Do you ever hear them on Saturdays at 6:00 p.m.

EM: Okay. I just thought that that was the 6 o'clock. . . .

RM: No, that's the air raid shelter. They would go off in different sections of town. They got one there on the Madison Avenue fire station. There are south side, north side, east side shelters. But, people were cautioned about air raid shelters. We were trained in Red Cross. We had that down at the YMCA, the training.

EM: Were you an air raid

RM: Yes. That certain section. . . . Yes, I was involved in the air raid and Red Cross.

EM: Okay. What were your duties?

RM: My duties were to. . . . In case of the real thing, we had to work on people. Artificial respiration and so on and so forth. How to give first aid and how to put tourniquets on.

EM: First aid.

RM: First aid. Splints, tourniquets, respiration.

EM: And the shelter would have been inside the settlement house?

RM: Yes.

EM: What other kinds of things went on in there?

RM: It was just routine daily living. People would go to work and come home, and that was their home.

EM: Where did you do shopping?

RM: Our shopping was done in a store up on Belmont Avenue. We had an A&P, Krogers, Acme stores.

EM: Was Acme like a supermarket?

RM: Yes, it was a locally-owned supermarket.

EM: How did you get around?

RM: I had a 1937 Chevrolet car. Yes, I got around. Of course, gasoline was only 16 cents a gallon. During the war, I was working at Republic Rubber Division at the time gasoline was rationed. [Since] I had riders with me, the government gave me A, B, and C stamps which would give me more gas because I was taking people to work in my car which was conserving transportation.

EM: Oh, so they gave you extra stamps.

RM: Instead of four people driving their own cars, one person would drive their car. He was allowed more gas to go back and forth to work.

EM: It was always you? You didn't take turns driving?

RM: No, it was just me.

EM: The others didn't have cars?

RM: They had cars, but they only had A stamps which would only give them two or three gallons a week. It was rationed. Gasoline was rationed just like coffee and sugar and butter. Everything was rationed. In fact, I have the ration books here.

EM: You still have some?

RM: Yes, I still have the ration books. Each family was allowed on book person, which was husband, wife, and children. I had three ration books for my children, one for myself and one for my wife. They had coupons for sugar and for butter. You were allowed so much. You had to present that coupon book to the cashier when you went through the cashier.

EM: As it enough?

RM: It was ample, yes. You had to budget and you had to live and eat within what they allowed you. You could always use more, but you just made due.

EM: What were the feelings about rationing? Were the people willing to go along with it?

RM: Yes, we made sacrifices. It didn't take us long to get in the groove. It didn't take us long to convert to a wartime production. That's when Rosie the Riveter got her name back in World War II.

EM: Did you know anybody that. . . ?

RM: Yes. I went to General Fireproofing. After I had this job with the Finance Corporation, my . . . called me and said, "You have to get out of that job and get into sanctioned work, wartime work." So, I quit the job and went to General Fireproofing. We were making aircrafts. We were making P-63s. We were making the fuselage here in Youngstown. We shipped the fuselage and the wings to Buffalo and they assembled it in Buffalo. Those planes went all to Russia.

EM: You mean, we gave them?

RM: Oh, yes. Russia got all those planes.

EM: Was there any bad feelings about what you were making going to Russia.

RM: No, because after Hitler invaded Russia, naturally they were our allies. We were fighting the Germans and the Russians were fighting the Germans, so by helping the Russians, we were helping ourselves by the same token.

EM: So, you still had the patriotic feeling?

RM: Yes, but when I started at General Fireproofing, quite a few women in slacks.

EM: You weren't used to seeing women in slacks?

RM: Well, that's when the trend started. They workd like men, side by side. They done welding and then done basically just about anything a man would do.

EM: What was the feeling toward them? Did you have a tendency to think she was cute or did you respect what she was doing?

RM: Oh, I respected what she was doing. I had a woman on my project. I was in charge of the project of getting three and a half fuselages in an 8 hour shift. We worked 10 hours a

day, 7 days a week. Seventy hours a week. They called them swing shifts, three shifts around the clock.

EM: And they worked right along with you?

RM: Oh, yes. We worked 70 hours a week, 10 hours a day.

EM: That's a lot.

RM: Yes. But, she was there before I got on this particular job and she was my helper. We were riveting what were called luminous skins to the fuselage. She had to be inside the . . . underneath with an air hammer. So, one time, she took her bucking bar off the rivet. When you do that, you have nothing to hold that air hammer going through the skin. It ruined the job. The FBI thought I sabotaged the ship. I was called in. They thought I sabotaged it, but no, I didn't sabotage it.

EM: Did they talk to her, too?

RM: Yeah, they talked to her, sure. But the FBI was in there because this was wartime production. Anything that didn't look right, right away, they classified it as sabotage. She was getting a dollar an hour and I was getting 75 cents an hour. That's the only thing I didn't like about the job.

EM: Why was she getting paid more?

RM: Because she was there a few weeks longer.

EM: Seniority.

RM: You started out at 75 cents an hour and after so amny weeks, you got a dollar an hour. There was no union set up there. I told my superintendent it wasn't fair, but eventually I got up to a dollar an hour.

EM: Did she continue to work after the war?

RM: That I do not know, because I left. I went to the Navy then. I was called. Uncle Sam sent me greetings even though I had three children.

EM: And the defense job?

RM: The defense job didn't stop me. I was 31 years old at the time with 3 children.

EM: And they still took you?

RM: Yes.

EM: Wow. What were your feelings about that?

RM: Well, I was called and what are you going to do? Do your patriotic duty, they go to serve. I didn't feel too bad, because I met men there a lot older than me with a lot bigger families. So, they just wanted to fill the quota, the draft board. They didn't care whether you were. . . . As long as you had a little heat in your body, they'd take you in.

EM: Where did you get sent?

RM: I got sent to the Great Lakes after that. I went to Cleveland to the old post office. That's where the induction center was. From there we went to Great Lakes and boot camp for six weeks. Six weeks of boot camp.

EM: Was that hard?

RM: I shouldn't say this, but being that we're talking about segregation. . . . Did you know we were segregated in boot camp?

EM: In boot camp?

RM: Oh, yes. One side of the road was white and the other side was colored saliors. The road was the dividing line. Great Lakes train station.

EM: Were you allowed to mix after hours?

RM: We didn't mix. We didn't get to see each other. You did aboard the ship, but there's still that segregation feeling back from the 30s and 40s.

EM: Were you segregated on board the ship?

RM: They had their own quarters, yes.

EM: But, close enough that you were. . . .

RM: Yes. We could associate with them.

EM: What were the feelings then?

RM: We didn't have that feeling. I never thought of it that way. I come from the old school. My parents came from Europe in the early 1900s, in 1908, if I'm not mistaken. That's when they started immigrating to the United States--the turn of the century. That's when you had this Ellis Island. That's when people came from all parts of Europe--Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania. My parents were born and raised in Romania. Of course, I was born in this cournty. But, that's when they

started coming to America. [They were] hard working people. They were the back bone of this country--the Polish people, the Yugoslavians, the Hungarians, the Romanians. They couldn't read or write, but they had a strong back and they were glad just to be in America, to be in this country. I worked for a lot of them. When I worked in Gary, Indiana in 1935, I worked for Carnegie Steel. There was no union. You worked wherever they put you. I bought a job for \$50. That's the way I got a job. I had connections with one of the superintendents in the shop at Carnegie Steel.

EM: You had to give somebody \$50?

RM: Yes.

EM: Was that a common thing?

RM: Yes.

EM: That's a lot of money.

RM: Yes. I borrowed \$50 to get a job and I was glad to get it, too. Jobs were very precious. You got a job, you cherished it. You had something when you had a job. You had an income. You did anything just to. . . . People had pride. There was no such thing as food stamps. No welfare. I can remember going to high school in the 30s when my stomach was so empty it would growl in class for lack of food. I was so embarrassed. It's hard to digest, but it's true.

EM: Wow. What were your feelings about that? Did you go to a public school?

RM: It was a red schoolhouse. I used to ring the bell. It was a hand bell. We had one big building with three classes in it. There was a big coal furnace to heat the whole building.

EM: More than one room?

RM: No, it was one big room. Then we had two smaller houses on the side of the bigger building that were for different grades. Then we had boys' outhouses and girls' outhouses and potbelly stoves.

EM: Was there one teacher?

RM: Yes, she taught several classes.

EM: Your experiences at Westlake were good experiences?

RM: Very good experiences. They were hard times, believe me. When I came to Youngstown in 1937, there was still the

extension of the Depression. The only thing that pulled us out of the Depression was World War II. That was what brought our economy back because our plants were . . . people were working 8, 10, 12 hours a day.

EM: You didn't have to go out and find a job then.

RM: No way. They were begging for help.

EM: You mentioned that strike beforehand.

RM: Yes, that was in 1937. They had a riot down there on Poland Avenue.

EM: Did the unions get a hold? Did you have unions when you were working for the defense?

RM: No. When I worked for defense, they were just starting to organize. They were just getting members to sign up. They were passing out pamphlets. It was a battle before you got enough signatures and enough power to stand up to management.

EM: People weren't interested in belonging to a union?

RM: Oh, yes, they were; sure, they were interested. Management just took advantage of labor. They would make them do anything they wanted for cheap labor. You worked wherever they put you. There was no such thing where you weren't allowed to do this job. It could have been carpenter work or digging. Unions did do a lot for the American working people.

EM: Is there anything about your life that you would have wished could have gone differently?

RM: No, nothing.

EM: Is there anything you would like to add? Have we missed anything?

RM: No.

EM: I can't thank you enough.

RM: I can't thank you enough for taking the time to listen to me.

EM: You did us a big favor, and we thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW