

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles Police Department

Personal Experience

O. H. 531

MARTHA NEWHARD

Interviewed

by

Stephen Papalas

on

August 31, 1982

MARTHA NEWHARD

Martha Newhard was born on May 11, 1904 in Niles, Ohio to Elizabeth and S. L. Davis. Martha lived all her life in Niles and graduated from Niles McKinley High School in 1923.

She married the late Elmer Newhard and they had one daughter, Dorothy Newhard Shriver, age 57.

Martha vividly recalls the merchants in downtown Niles earlier in this century. She also gave a good description of the Niles Flood of 1913 and a Ku Klu Klan rally she secretly watched one night, just outside the Niles city limits.

Martha, who enjoys bridge, is an active member of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church. She is also an active member of the Niles Methodist Senior Women's Group and resides on Victor Avenue, in Niles.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles Police Department

INTERVIEWEE: MARTHA NEWHARD

INTERVIEWER: Stephen G. Papalas

SUBJECT: Mayors, Policemen, Chiefs, KKK Riot,
Flood of 1913

DATE: August 31, 1982

P: This is an interview with Martha Newhard for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. It deals with the Niles Police Department. The interviewer is Stephen G. Papalas, who is at Martha's home at 34 Victor Street on August 31, 1982 at 4:24 p.m.

Martha, could you please tell me when and where you were born?

N: I was born in Niles, Ohio, May 11, 1904.

P: At your home? At your parent's home?

N: At my parent's home on Warren Avenue in Niles, Ohio.

P: Where did your parents come from? Were they always here in Niles?

N: My mother was born and raised right here in Niles. My father was born in Warren, Ohio.

P: What was your mom's maiden name?

N: Elizabeth Trueman.

P: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

N: I had on sister.

P: Her name?

- N: Dorothy. Her married name was Dorothy Davis Smith. She has been dead for twenty-one years.
- P: Who did she end up marrying?
- N: His name was Smith, O. B. Smith.
- P: What are some of your earliest recollections of your childhood? What do you remember most vividly?
- N: I have to think before I speak.
- P: Would it be some of your friends? Would it be some of your experiences with your sister or parents?
- N: (No response)
- P: You lived next door you say?
- N: Yes. It was 30 Kelly Street. It was changed to Victor Avenue during the war. It was renamed after a soldier, Victor Huber who was in the war. Later my parents moved to Chestnut Street close to McKinley High as my sister and I would soon be going to high school.
- There was just nineteen months between us. I can remember us playing around. We had a barn in the back of our house then. We used to play in that barn. Where they would throw the feed down to horses, we used to go upstairs in the barn and go down through there into the trough. We were like the Katzenjammer Kids. We did everything because we were so close in age. My sister was always a lot taller than me. I was always kind of a shorty when I was small and a little girl. We used to climb up in the trees and slide down the branches. I often think of it now because I moved away from here to Chestnut Street, close to the high school, and then I came back here again in 1923 after I was married to live. I came back to live next to my old home in this house here which is 34 Victor Avenue. Next door is where I spent my childhood.
- P: How long were you away from Niles?
- N: Three years. We moved to Youngstown. My father worked in Youngstown. Then we came back here to Niles and I have been here ever since.
- P: Where did your father work?
- N: My father worked in the dray business for sometime. He had a horse and wagon and hauled stuff from the railroads for stores and people here in Niles.

P: What year did you say you got married?

N: 1923. Dad worked right down here in town. There used to be saloons there. My dad worked in this one right here. There is a picture of it in this book.

P: He was a bartender in there?

N: Yes.

P: What was the name of the saloon?

N: I can't think of it right now. It was right on Main Street. It was right close to Carmello's Ice Cream Parlor-Confectionery. It showed the inside of it.

P: What was the name of it then?

N: The Grand.

P: The Grand Saloon?

N: Yes. I can remember my father working in there.

P: What did it look like inside?

N: Just like that picture.

P: Very elegant?

N: Yes, beautiful bar.

P: Who did you later marry, then?

N: Elmer Newhard.

P: Where did he work?

N: He was born and raised here in Niles.

P: Where did he work?

N: He worked at Niles Glass Works before we were married. They made electric light bulbs. He was a glassblower. Then he worked for my father.

P: At The Grand?

N: No. My father later had a meat market here in Niles right on E. Park Avenue. You know where Laws was, Laws Grocery Store? They tore it down. My dad and Mr. Lyden built that building. Their name was on the front, Lyden & Davis, Laws market.

P: Do you remember anything about Chief Lincoln Rounds?

N: He was a cousin to my mother.

P: I didn't know that. What type of man was he?

N: He was a tall, portly man. He was a very nice and friendly man.

P: What about other policemen that worked under him like Barrett? Did you know Jack Barrett?

N: To see him, yes. Not real well, but I knew him.

P: Any of the other policemen that you might recall? Does anyone stick out in your mind? Whitticker, maybe?

N: Yes. I remember him and Neiss.

P: Mr. Neiss? What type of people were they?

N: They were jolly and friendly people.

P: Whitticker also?

N: Yes. They were nice men as far as I remember them then.

P: Did you ever hear of Mayor Charles Crow?

N: Yes.

P: What can you tell me about him?

N: I remember him well. He was a big man, tall, stately man. He was a nice-looking man. He was a good friend of my father's. They used to go fishing together.

P: Where did they go at?

N: I don't know. I don't know where they went. I suppose somewhere around here. I was pretty young then.

P: What else can you tell me about Crow?

N: I remember his family. They were a nice family.

P: Did he have anything in particular that sticks out in your mind while he was in office that he did?

N: I can't say anything bad about him. You know what I mean. He was a good mayor. He was a big jolly man.

P: Did he have any problems with the bootleggers that you

might recall?

N: The bootleggers? I don't remember that he did.

P: Did you ever go into any speakeasies or did you see bootleggers or know about the problems on the east end?

N: No.

P: What was it like on the east end?

N: There were places over there where I knew they had gambling and everything and speakeasies and things over on the east end. I was never in any of those places.

P: Do you remember the names of the gambling houses?

N: No.

P: How about Vigorita?

N: That name is Vigorito. Can you mention any others?

P: Jennings.

N: Oh, yes. I remember Jennings to see him. He lived over in East Niles.

P: Did you ever hear of the "Black Hand" at that time?

N: The "Black Hand" in Niles? No, I don't remember.

P: I want to go back a little bit when Neiss was a policeman. Did you ever hear of him being shot in the belt buckle up on Robbins Avenue?

N: Shot? No.

P: I was just wondering.

N: No, I don't remember that he was shot.

P: What can you tell me about the Ku Klux Klan?

N: That was a big organization around here?

P: How big?

N: I swear to God that a great number of people here in Niles joined the Klan.

P: Did you know men who were in it?

N: I knew of a couple, but I don't want to mention names?

P: Are they still alive today?

N: No.

P: What possessed a person to join? Why did they join?

N: To tell you the truth, I often wonder myself about the Klan if they really knew themselves. My mother and I and my husband went one night out of curiosity just to see what it was like. They were meeting in this big field. We just saw them in this field at a distance; we couldn't hear anything they were saying.

P: Where at?

N: It was somewhere way up North Main Street, going towards Warren.

What turned me against them was when I saw them burning that cross. I always thought the cross was something that you looked up to and respected. I couldn't see what they accomplished by burning the cross.

P: How did you know there was going to be a meeting? Was it broadcasted? Was it advertised?

N: We knew about it and knew where it was going to be.

P: From what? Reading in a newspaper?

N: No, I don't remember whether it was in the newspaper. I don't think so. We had heard somehow there was going to be this meeting. I can't even tell you now where we heard that. It was a great, big field somewhere where we went by--up North Main Street--out of curiosity.

P: About what year?

N: I was married. I think around 1924. We just drove by the place where they were at. We didn't stop close enough to hear what they were saying.

P: Was it before the riot?

N: Yes, I think it was. I remember walking down to Main Street to Chestnut Street-- that was where my parents lived--to watch that parade come down North Main Street. They assembled somewhere up North Main Street. They got together. There must have been a big field up in there somewhere. They were going to parade down North Main Street and downtown.

P: When you went to that field where they had that meeting that night, what did they say and do?

N: We just drove past, didn't stop. Just saw the big gathering there. We didn't see or hear their ritual at all. We were just watching at a distance to see what they did. They all had these white hoods on. Their faces were covered up. You couldn't see who anybody was.

P: Did they use torches?

N: Yes. It seemed as if there were torches like lighting. We were really kind of scared.

P: Why?

N: We just felt uncomfortable there.

P: Because of the way they were dressed?

N: Yes.

P: Do you think that maybe that is the way they wanted everybody to feel?

N: I don't know. It seemed like they were a determined organization. I don't know whether religion is what it was all about.

P: How did a person become a leader in the Klan?

N: I don't know.

P: Tell me about the Ku Klux Klan riot in Niles that happened on Halloween in 1924? What do you remember about that?

N: On Halloween?

P: Wasn't that on October 31, 1924?

N: That would be right before my daughter was born. She was born in December, two months after this doing.

P: Was there a Catholic church that was desecrated by the Klan somewhere during that time period here in Niles?

N: I don't remember a Catholic church here being desecrated in Niles, no.

P: Do you know of any bombs that were planted near a bridge in case the Klan rode in on a train and it would be blown up? Did you ever hear of that?

N: No.

P: What do you remember?

N: The two main things I remember was going that night to try to see what we could see and going down to watch the parade. Then the militia same in. They called them in.

P: Where was the parade held?

N: It was supposed to come down from North Road here in Niles, down North Main Street and around and down through town, but they were stopped. I just heard from a Klan member's wife that they could parade if they removed their masks. But I was young then and don't remember if they really did. Maybe you could get a better description from someone else.

P: Who stopped them?

N: I guess it was certain people who had guns on them and all. It was something. They never marched right down through town as I remember.

P: Were these people from Niles, a lot of them?

N: Some of them probably were. I didn't know them by name or anything.

P: Were they Catholics and Italians?

N: Yes, I think so.

P: They, in other words, were the target of the Ku Klux Klan.

N: Yes.

P: What happened there?

N: It was stopped. The parade was stopped.

P: Where at?

N: I think before they came through town. How they got this militia in there so quick! They had these guns. They were over here by this plant, stationed by the General Electric Plant on North Main Street.

P: General Electric?

N: Yes. Right in front of there they were stationed. They had tents and guns set up. We were under martial law for some time there. You had to be off of the streets at a certain time.

P: What did you see? Did you see the riot at all?

N: No. It happened before they got down to where I was standing to watch it. I walked down from my parents' home to Main Street right down at the end of Neal Street. That is where you come under the underpass.

P: By Maple?

N: That is Maple. The next street down . . .

P: Federal Street?

N: No.

P: Williams Street went out that way before didn't it?

N: That is before you got to Maple Avenue. You used to be able to go up right off of Main Street where you come down over the Erie Railroad. It was the Erie and B & O Railroad there where that underpass is now. You have to go up a grade to go over them.

P: What was the role of the police department in Niles in that period? Do you know? What were they doing?

N: I don't know. I think I don't remember seeing any police that day the parade was to be.

P: What was Mayor Kistler's reputation like after the riot? what did people think of Kistler?

N: He was a pretty well thought of man. I knew them, the Kistlers, rather personally. They lived not far from us on West Park Avenue about two blocks west of us.

P: Did you ever hear any rumors that he was a member of the Ku Klux Klan?

N: No.

P: Did you know that he spent the night at the Grand Cyclops' home in Warren?

N: No, I never heard that he did.

P: That is where he stayed the night of the riot, in the leaders' home of the Ku Klux Klan.

N: I never knew that.

P: His home was bombed. Did you know that?

N: He lived right up here on the top of Park Avenue. I don't remember if that is where he lived at the time of the parade.

P: Who was perhaps your favorite mayor looking back over the years?

N: The one that I really remember most is Dickey Neiss.

P: He was a policeman.

N: Oh, you are talking about a mayor?

P: Yes. Don't worry, I was going to ask you that question also. Let's go with the policemen.

N: Name some of the policemen.

P: There is Whitticker and Neiss even today compared to today's policemen all the way through the years, Bergundy, Marsico, John Scott, Egu.

N: I remember them. I have kind of forgotten them.

P: Who do you remember the most? Do you remember any of them?

N: Mr. Neiss, his daughter and I were rather chums and were close in age. He had four daughters. I used to go to their house.

P: What about police chiefs? Do you remember any particular police chief that was your favorite?

N: Nicholas.

P: Pretty good?

N: Yes. I used to go to his home with his daughter.

P: What kind of guy was he?

N: He seemed like a very nice man to me. Charlie Nicholas was a good man.

P: What about the mayors of Niles. Who was your favorite? Who would you say did the best job and why?

N: You name some.

P: We have discussed Crow. There was Naylor before him. Ryan and after Crow was Kistler.

N: Kistler and Crow, I've heard of them. I don't remember

- Naylor or Ryan.
- P: Marshall, Ferguson.
- N: I remember Ferguson.
- P: What did you know about Ferguson?
- N: He was a druggist. He had a drugstore here.
- P: How about Fred Williams?
- N: I remember him, but I don't know him as well.
- P: There was William Carney and Elmer Fisher.
- N: I remember Elmer Fisher. He married a girl I knew in Niles.
- P: Is there anything in particular that you remember about him?
- N: He was about as good as any of them I guess.
- P: R. J. Hubbard, Mayor Lennie.
- N: Yes, I remember Mayor Lennie.
- P: Smith before him. After him was Carmen DeChristafero.
- N: I remember when Carmen DeChristafero was mayor.
- P: Which one of those guys do you remember the most about? Which one do you think did the best job? Did you ever pay attention to that stuff?
- N: Not so much. I remember them being mayor. You hear so much about men in those jobs. There are likes and dislikes. Some people think they are okay and do a good job and there are others . . . It is the same today.
- P: That is right.
- N: There are the likes and dislikes.
- P: What do you remember about high school? What was your favorite subject? Who was your favorite teacher? What can you tell me?
- N: It was just high school. History was my favorite subject. It was during the war. I was going to this school on Warren Avenue. I was in the eighth grade there. They sold war bonds and war stamps. The kids all in school every week bought these war stamps.

P: For World War II?

N: Yes. I had a job for the principal of the school. Her name was Kitty Craig. I had to take that money every week down to the high school. I was trusted to take that money down every week to the high school. I would be afraid to do a job like that today. I didn't think anything of it then. You would be afraid to carry a bag of money today.

P: Who was your favorite teacher? Who do you remember?

N: In the high school you mean?

P: Yes.

N: I had men teachers and women teachers. There was an English teacher that I really like a lot. Her name was Faye Moates. She came from over around Wooster, Ohio. I had Henry Wagner for biology. He married a girl from Niles here, a Kay girl. Mr. Kay used to have a Pritchard & Kay Haberdashery here in Niles. He married their daughter. I like him. You know, you like certain ones better than others.

P: Who were some of your friends?

N: In school?

P: Yes.

N: The McEvoy's lived up on Robbins Avenue right across from Mt. Carmel Church. You know where that gasoline station is across from the church?

P: Yes.

N: Their house was right there. Marcus McEvoy just died this past winter. He was a teacher; he was superintendent of one of the schools. Madden, Mrs. Madden, lives on Arlington now. She's Tom Madden's wife. He went to school with me. He died too. He became a lawyer. In school, we were all friends. I had a lot of them.

P: Small classes too?

N: We were close friends when I went to that school. It was a new school. My husband went there. It was only about three or four years old when I went there.

P: Do you have anything else in particular that you would like to say before we end the interview? Is there anything that would be interesting dealing with Niles or the police department?

N: I can remember well the 1913 flood.

P: What do you remember about that?

N: We were living over next door here. We could see the water up over the railroad down here. It was that high. We were kind of high up here. This is higher up than Park Avenue. The Thomas' that lived down there were scared to death that it was going to come up to their place. I can remember him coming up to ask my dad if they could come up to our house if the water came up to their's. He said, "You are much higher." We often laughed about that after. We went downtown to South Main Street down a big hill where the new viaduct is now. At that time, from the top you went way down a steep hill. It was down over B & O Railroad and bridge.

P: There was a big hill right down to the river.

N: And to the railroad. The B & O Railroad was there. You had to cross that before you went over the old iron bridge over the river to the south side of Niles. At the time, my dad was in the express business. He was going down there and he had to stop because there was a train coming by. The team reared up and threw him off of the wagon and broke his collarbone.

P: Is that right?

N: Yes. We stood there and watched that water. They went across in boats. That is how they had to go over from this side to the south side in boats. You couldn't cross. There was nowhere else to cross in town. The water was too high to drive over the bridge at that time.

P: How long did the flood last?

N: I can't exactly say how long it lasted. It was pretty bad. The B & O Station is still down there and the only thing you could see was the top of that sticking out. The water was up that high.

P: That was quite a flood.

N: We haven't had anything since that.

P: How long did it rain before it flooded like it did?

N: I just can't remember that, Steve. I was born in 1904. That was 1913. I was just a kid. I was nine years old.

P: I thank you for the interview.

N: Then we used to go on the streetcars to Warren.

P: Oh, yes, the streetcars.

N: We used to get off over here right where the underpass came up through there to go to Warren. There was a little shed and you could go in there and wait for the streetcar.

P: Is that right?

N: The streetcar tracks were just above the Erie Railroad tracks then on North Main Street. The streetcar from town came up around to go to Warren, Ohio. The streetcar came around State Street over the B & O Railroad tracks and up Robbins Avenue to go to Youngstown, Ohio.

P: Just before the overpass now.

N: Yes. It [streetcar] would go up around there up to where that little shed was where I told you, and you would wait for the streetcar to come there to pick up people from around the north side of town to go either to Warren or to Youngstown.

There was the Harris Plant there then. That was taken down when it was all changed there. You know, the railroad and all. We used to be scared to go up there. My dad used to take us in the wintertime. He would rent a sleigh up there. My sister and I would get on the floor with the blanket over us to go. Coming back one night we got to the railroad crossings there on North Main. The Erie was up here and the B & O was down here. The Erie was up higher. In between there was quite a space between the two railroads. My gosh we were caught in there when the gates came down. The watchman was up in that little shanty up there and there was this train coming and we were stuck in between there. You might know that we were scared to death. We were frightened. Had the horses gotten frightened you know, we might have been killed. That gates were crossing down on both. We were right in there. You couldn't get out. We were really frightened that night. Every winter my dad would rent a horse and sleigh and take us. Imagine us going up there in one of those sleighs with the horse pulling the sleigh.

P: That would have been great.

N: It wasn't the automobiles then, you know. I think it was 1916 that my parents got their first automobile. It was a Buick. We lived over next door, at 30 Victor Avenue.

P: It was many years ago, wasn't it?

N: They went to New York with another couple from Youngstown. I have got pictures of them. They had these dusters on and these bonnets tied because they were all dirt roads. It was dusty. My mother and dad went to New York. I was just a little girl.

P: I thank you for the interview. It was very, very interesting.

END OF INTERVIEW