

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
Smoky Hollow

The Smoky Hollow Project
O.H. 78

MRS. LUCY NAZARINI
Interviewed
by
Annette Mills
on
April 12, 1976

LUCY JESSIE MARINELLI NAZARINI

Lucy Nazarini was born December 5, 1918 on Emerald Street in Smoky Hollow. Her parents are Angeline and Dominic Marinelli. Lucy married Nicholas Nazarini in 1940. They have three sons, Robert, Joseph, and Anthony. Mrs. Nazarini attended Rayen High School. She was a housewife and store clerk until February, 1976 when they sold the store.

Mrs. Nazarini attends St. Charles Church and is a member of the Altar Rosary Society. Her special interest is dancing.

Mrs. Nazarini recalls as a young lady how the young men stood on the corners and whistled as she or other young ladies walked by. She said even then men were great girl watchers. Mrs. Nazarini tells as a youngster how they were entertained in their home by her father singing to them.

Mrs. Nazarini recalls the good old days of Smoky Hollow with no regrets. Smoky Hollow was good to her and her family, she feels. They made, and have, a lot of friends in Smoky Hollow.

ANNETTE MILLS

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INTERVIEWEE: MRS. LUCY NAZARINI
INTERVIEWER: Annette Mills
SUBJECT: The Smoky Hollow Project
DATE: April 12, 1976

MILLS: This is an interview with Lucy Nazarini for the Oral History Project on Smoky Hollow. The interviewer is Annette Mills and we are at 453 Ewing Road in Youngstown, Ohio on April 12, 1976. It is approximately 10:00 p.m.

NAZARINI: I was born in 1918 and they called me the "flu baby" because that was during the flu epidemic. In fact, my mom was really sick with the flu when she gave birth to me. I lived in the Hollow almost all of my life. In my childhood days my family would gather together three or four times a week in the evenings with the neighbors, and we would dance with the young and the old. My father would always sing. We just had so many good times together.

We had no allowances in those days. We would get five cents on Sunday only, once in a while. That was a big treat. We would go to the store and get a big bag of candy for five cents and we thought that was great.

We would play baseball in the street with the boys and the girls. If we broke a window, we would all pay our share. We also played hopscotch and jacks. The one thing that I liked the best was when we were old enough my mom would go to town shopping. We would sneak her sugar and make fudge. Then when she would come home, oh boy, she was angry! We used up all her sugar.

When we got older in our teens, the young men didn't have cars like they do today. So, they would hang

around corners and watch the girls go by. When we girls would go by, we knew that they would look us up and down, and I think we kind of liked that.

M: Would you say that that was like girl watching?

N: Yes.

M: Was girl watching kind of a fad back then?

N: Oh yes, that was what it was.

M: Do they still have that fad today?

N: I don't think so. No, not hanging around.

M: Not hanging around the corner, but do you think that the young men still are girl watching?

N: Oh, I think so.

Anyway, I was married in 1940 to Nicolas Nazarini at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. Father Franco witnessed our marriage. After we were married, I gave birth to four boys. I also worked in our store from 1940 to 1975 with my husband. Another thing, when we were young and spring would come, we would go picking dandelions for salad and cook and eat them. They were good. Everybody had a large garden then.

M: Could you tell us a little bit about your experiences in the store? For example, what was it like to be putting in long hours in the store and then maintaining the home and raising four children?

N: Now that I am out of the store, I wonder how I really did it, but I did really enjoy it. I really worked hard and long hours. The customers were very nice. They were good to us and we were good to them, naturally. I was the sausage maker-mixer. It was hard work but my husband and I enjoyed it. The store was good to us, really.

M: Did your boys ever come in and help out with the store?

N: Oh yes. I had our boys working in the store. In fact, I was the cashier and I would keep our baby in the bassinet behind me. I used a banana box with cut up paper in it also. The banana box came in handy when I didn't have the bassinet with me. Our boys were right with us.

And when they got older, they all worked in the store. All of them helped.

M: They all had their chance at being a store clerk then?

N: Yes, but none of them wanted it.

M: None of them wanted to take over in Dad's and Mom's shoes, did they?

N: No, they didn't. I think mostly they didn't like the long hours involved in the grocery business.

M: Working in the store was pretty confining, then?

N: Right.

M: Is there anything else that you can remember about your own childhood? You said something about being what they called the "flu baby" because you were born during the flu epidemic.

N: In 1918, yes.

M: Were they able to save people from the flu at that time, or was that when people were just dying from it because they didn't have the vaccine?

N: My mother said that they were dying like flies. In fact, my mother didn't think she would come out of the epidemic alive. My father was sent to a hospital because he also had the flu. My mother was sent to another place. I don't know if it was a hospital or just some rooms someplace, because they didn't have room for all of the people sick with the flu. She thought my father was dead and he thought she was dead. When Father Franco went to visit my father he told him that his wife was alive and not to worry. But my mother did tell me that if you went to town the people would just fall over like flies, dead, from this flu.

M: They would just get so weak that they would drop from it?

N: Yes, because the flu would just come on you suddenly.

M: I was wondering if you could tell us just a little bit about your own neighborhood and something about what your house was like?

- N: We were like a family. We didn't have to knock on anybody's door, we would just walk in. It was just like everybody's house belonging to everybody, it seemed. And everybody helped each other especially when there was sickness. We would always make a pot of chicken soup for the sick. Our homes were nice. They didn't have the furniture that they have today, but they were nice and clean. They had wooden floors and we scrubbed them till they were white. We had a lot of fun, too, in our younger days.
- M: Would you compare your home in your old neighborhood to what they call a ghetto today? Was Smoky Hollow as a whole a ghetto?
- N: No.
- M: You said that your house was clean. Was this cleanliness pretty much the custom of the people in the Hollow? Or were there some people who were just the other way around?
- N: No, they were all clean. When Saturday came along it was time to wash the windows and scrub the floors. Monday was wash day, Tuesday was ironing day. We all had special days for chores.
- M: Cleaning wasn't just the once a year spring cleaning then, but rather it was a weekly thing.
- N Yes.
- M: Could you tell me if in your own home you had all the conveniences such as bathroom facilities? I understand that at one time there were what they called outhouses in the Smoky Hollow. Were you more fortunate to have bathroom facilities in your home?
- N: Yes, we had bathroom facilities at home.
- M: Did you have them right from the very beginning or did you have one installed later?
- N: The bathtub we had installed later.
- M: But you did have indoor bathroom privileges?
- N: Right.

- M: Because you were a youngster at that time, what did you do to take a bath?
- N: We used the wash tub. We would heat the water on the stove. To tell you the truth, we would all take a bath in the same water. We didn't have that much warm water. My mother would have some extra water and rinse us off.
- M: You had to heat your water then. You didn't have a hot water tank, then, to begin with?
- N: On no, no hot water tank. We heated water on the stove.
- M: During this time, then, there were a lot of things that we don't have today. I know for a fact that TV and radio came in a lot later. What about telephones and things of this nature?
- N: No, we had no phones. In fact, as soon as it got dark we went to bed. That was it. Then we would be up early. I think "early to bed, early to rise" was a pretty good description of us. We had no electricity. We had gas lights and coal stoves for cooking and heating.
- M: Yes. They didn't have any form of entertainment then in the homes other than maybe your mother or some member of your family telling you a story.
- N: Well, this is why we got together with the neighbors three or four times a week in the evenings. I remember the accordion and the banjo; the men would play music and we would all dance together. That was our entertainment. We would dance the tarantella (an Italian dance).
- M: You made your own entertainment and had your own musicians pretty much in the neighborhood?
- N: Yes.
- M: Then you kind of got together and enjoyed each other's company along with the entertainment?
- N: Yes.
- M: Could you tell me a little bit about what some of the times were like at baptisms and things of this nature? There were quite a few Catholics, I would imagine, in Smoky Hollow if the people were Italian.

- N: Yes, they were mostly all Italians around our neighborhood. Those occasions were the good times, too. We waited for baptisms and weddings.
- M: Could you describe a regular Italian baptismal?
- N: Well, just the sponsors and the father would go to church with the baby. But we would all pitch in and cook, and that was a big occasion. We would have everything. Meat is another thing that we didn't have all the time. We didn't have meat every night like we do now. On Saturday and Sunday we would get some meat. It was so tasty then! But we did all right just the same. We were all healthy.
- M: Could you tell us about some of the foods that were prepared for these special occasions?
- N: Well, one of the foods was antipasto. Then there was macaroni, soup, chicken, salad and the ladies would bake the Italian pastries. We would have a good time eating and then dancing. That was the main thing.
- M: Was this just for the Godparents and the parents of the child, or was everybody in the neighborhood and their families invited?
- N: Everybody in the neighborhood was invited plus friends.
- M: Would they have this right in the home?
- N: Right in the home, yes. There was always room.
- M: There was always room for one more, right? This seemed to be the whole outlook of the community. It was just like one big open family. There was something else that I would like to understand. Could you describe for us your own wedding?
- N: Well, first of all I will never forget that morning how it rained. Did it rain! We were married at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. Our reception was at the Mansion on Logan Avenue. Do you recall the Mansion?
- M: No, I don't.
- N: It was beautiful. It was outdoors. We had music and we danced outdoors. We also had good food, the soup, the macaroni, the chicken, and the drinks. It was mostly the

family that was invited. We had more or less a family wedding.

M: It was mostly family. When you speak of the Mansion, was that kind of like a pavillion?

N: It was a large home. It was both outdoor and indoor. Anyway, the big bands would come there I remember. And then the nuns took that old house over for their convent later on.

M: Are you referring to the convent on Logan Avenue?

N: Yes.

M: Where they have the retreat house now?

N: No, but on the same road farther up.

M: I know that they used to have weddings that lasted all day and late into the evening. Now they have weddings where they get married at 5:00 and by 7:00 the bride is already off on her honeymoon.

N: Our wedding lasted just about all day. I think it was over about six. We were married at 9:00 in the morning and then we all gathered at my parents' home until about 6:00. Then we left for our honeymoon.

M: Was there any dancing at your wedding?

N: Oh yes. Again they played the accordion.

M: That is pretty much traditional, isn't it, for an Italian wedding?

N: Yes. Another thing that I don't see too much today is when the bride leaves her home for church, all the neighborhood is out there to see her come out in her wedding clothes.

M: You mean when she is leaving to go get married?

N: Yes, to go to the church.

M: And they were all there to kind of greet her and probably pull at her veil and everything else, mess her all up before she gets to church.

N: No, they didn't mess the bride's clothes. They were there to admire her.

M: Could you describe your own street for us in a little bit of detail?

N: The streets were mostly like all of the others.

M: Do you mean that they had concrete roads or black pavement? What kind of roads did they have? Did they have sidewalks? Did they have huge lots?

N: No, the lots weren't that huge. Just the normal homes with five or six rooms. The streets were made of bricks. They weren't such wide streets. There were about twenty or thirty homes on each street.

M: What street were you born on?

N: Valley Street.

M: Was it all brick and were the sidewalks and curbs on Valley Street?

N: That I could remember, yes. I guess at one time there weren't. Across the street from us were three rows of flats, as they were called then. Today they are called apartment homes.

M: Could you describe those a little bit for us?

N: There were mostly German and Polish people who lived there at one time. And then little by little the blacks moved in. But they were very nice, quiet people, too. They lived there an awful long time.

M: Could you describe the flats themselves? The structure of the building?

N: The flats contained four or eight resident places in one flat apartment. So that would be about 24 families right across the street from us.

M: Was this building built of brick stone, cement or wood?

N: Wood,

M: And this was an older dwelling then, it wasn't anything real modern?

- N: Not modern like today, no. But they kept it up pretty nicely for a while. Some of the families that lived around there were the Ferriris'. John was a tailor. Maybe some people know him today. Edward DeBartolo lived right next door to us:
- M: Did the DeBartolo's build their own home there?
- N: Yes. Their home was a brick house.
- M: So, there were various structures of buildings in the Smoky Hollow. It wasn't just confined to the wood frame?
- N: Yes, there were brick and frame homes.
- M: What class of people would you say lived in the Hollow?
- N: Middle class people.
- M: All right then, they were holding up their own end and everybody was pretty much fending for themselves. When you say middle class do you mean they were all self supporting?
- N: Right.
- M: I understand that there was a park in Smoky Hollow. Could you describe that a little bit for us?
- N: It was called Oak Park. They had what you would call the flats, too. There were apartment homes and individual apartment homes. They were made of cement and there were about fifty of those homes.
- M: Could you describe the park itself? Why did they call it Oak Park?
- N: Why they called it a park? It really didn't look like a park. I don't know why they called it a park.
- M: Were there trees in the park?
- N: Not too many, no.
- M: Did they have lawns?
- N: They had a lawn, yes, and a few trees.
- M: Did your own homes have a lawn?

- N: Our home had a lawn. We had two large trees in front of our home. Most of the people had a large garden.
- M: Instead of using their lots for green lawns, then, they used them for gardens?
- N: Yes.
- M: Why do you think that this was so in that area or during that time? Why do you think that people had gardens and large ones?
- N: They would have the large gardens so that in the fall they would can food. This way they would have food all winter.
- M: Then this was pretty much a matter of survival?
- N: Right.
- M: They also did this to help defray some of their food expenses and things of this nature?
- N: Right, because most of our parents came from Italy and they came here alone. They had left their parents and couldn't speak a word of English. They worked hard and they survived.
- M: They were just pretty self-supporting and they pretty well maintained for themselves along the way?
- N: The amazing thing was that they couldn't speak a word of English. How they got along, I don't know.
- M: It was rather difficult for them to communicate then?
- N: Right, they couldn't read or write.
- M: If this were the case where so many of them settled around the same time, do you think that they were all pretty much in the same boat?
- N: Yes, they were.
- M: I would imagine that unless they all spoke a certain language it would be hard for them to communicate with a Slovak or with anyone else.
- N: Somehow or other they got to know what they were saying.

M: Do you think that they maybe learned to read sign language?

N: Something like that.

M: Is there anything else that you would like to reflect back on, for example, your own personal childhood?

N: We had a lot of happy times together. There were sad days too, but mostly good days. The people would share anything they had.

M: What was a typical day like in the Smoky Hollow?

N: Well, in the summertime was when we really had the fun. We would get up, help our parents around the house and then go play. We played baseball. That was my game with the boys.

M: When you say baseball with the boys, did you go to what we have now, a community park or something of this nature? Where did you go and play baseball?

N: Right out in the street. There weren't that many cars in those days. We didn't have to worry about a car coming along. We could hear it coming in those days.

M: What kind of cars did they have in those days?

N: The Essex and the Ford, that I could remember.

M: Would that be the Model-T Ford or were there some Fords even older than that which I don't know about?

N: The Model-T, yes.

M: There wouldn't be that many cars, so it would be permissible then to play out in the street?

N: Yes. Also, in the winter Valley Street was a hill and we would go sled riding. We would start at the top of the hill and go all the way down. We wouldn't worry about a car coming along.

M: Were your parents able to buy a sled for you?

N: No, we made them out of empty wooden grape boxes. My father was the carpenter.

M: Could you tell us a little bit about how your father made them?

N: He would shape the box like the sled of today. Then we would get on, and zoom! We would go down the hill. It was a lot of fun. We didn't have to buy all the fancy things of today. We got along just the same and we had a lot of fun.

M: You had just as much fun in a grape box and maybe even more because it was makeshift.

N: Maybe even more than today.

M: What else do you recall making out of some of the things that you had laying around your backyard or maybe at somebody's grocery store?

N: We had a wagon too. My father put wheels on an orange box crate. He put on wheels and a handle, and away we went! That was our wagon.

M: Was there anything else that you made your own playthings out of rather than using store bought materials?

N: I know one thing that we did. We made a desk out of the grape boxes also. Then we would play school. Also, at Christmas time when my father would go out and get the Christmas tree, we would make paper babydolls to hang on the tree. We never had all the ornaments of today, but making the ornaments was a lot of fun, too. We would also string popcorn. Like I said, we got along in those days without all the luxuries of today.

M: You had the bare necessities, but still you feel that you had an experience in the Smoky Hollow that perhaps you wouldn't have gotten in a more fluent area. Even if you had more money, you would have probably bought these things instead of experiencing the making of them?

N: We would be like the children of today, spoiled,

M: Now, you can't really say that all children of today are spoiled.

N: Not all, but just the same, we had it harder, much harder than they do today.

- M: Children have quite a bit more today probably than some. Was there anything else that you could recall that was very unique to Smoky Hollow?
- N: I think I just about said what I can remember.
- M: All right. There were a few things that came to mind as you were telling us about your Christmas. Is that the only time that you recall ever having to make things; like you said you made your little dolls to decorate your tree and you strung your own popcorn. What about at Easter time, did you do anything yourself or at any other time during your childhood that you felt was different than what you would have done if you had had an abundance of money?
- N: We would look forward to the good foods on the holidays because that was a time that my father made sure that we had everything. This was Christmas and Easter. For Easter we would enjoy my mother's homemade Easter bread.
- M: All right then, on any special occasion there was always plenty of food?
- N: Yes.
- M: Was this pretty much the case with most of the people in Smoky Hollow?
- N: Yes, on the holidays, that was it. That was the time that we would splash, in other words.
- M: Then they almost made it a point that everything was plentiful around special occasions or special holidays? Could you tell us what a typical Christmas would be like? What would you get for Christmas gifts? Do you recall any special Christmas?
- N: When we were young enough for Santa Claus, we would get maybe one small little toy, and that was it. And we were happy to get that.
- M: Could you remember any one toy?
- N: A small baby doll or a small set of dishes. And then of course we would find oranges in our stockings and that was it. But we were pleased to get that.

M: Mrs. Nazarini, could you tell me how many were in your own family?

N: There were five girls and one boy. My brother, Peter Morinelli, was killed in World War Two.

M: And then there was your mother and father, so that was eight all together?

N: Right.

M: Then there was always some little gift for each member of the family?

N: Some little gift, yes.

M: Do you feel that you were slighted during your childhood, or do you feel that all of you faired pretty good?

N: I don't think I felt slighted. This was it, this was what we got and we were satisfied.

M: Do you do this today with your own children, or did you do that when they were smaller; just give them one small gift?

N: I'll tell you, when they were younger, they got more than one small gift. But as they got a little older, we got them one large gift, like a typewriter, or golf clubs.

M: They were never given just one little remembrance of the holidays?

N: No.

M: I think that this is pretty true of this generation; that we try to do more for them than we were probably able to have done for us, even though there were no regrets. Would there be anything that you would change during your childhood experiences and the time that you were growing up in Smoky Hollow if you could?

N: Not while I was growing up. I don't think I would change anything. Those were the good days. We enjoyed them because most of all, we never had to fear like we do today. Being afraid of leaving your doors open when you go out, we never had to worry about that. We left the

doors open all the time. We never locked our doors. But today you have to lock the doors plus you have to still worry that they are going to get in.

M: Do you think that this is nationwide today, not just because you are out of the Smoky Hollow, but that this fear is being built up in all of us?

N: Yes.

M: Was it pretty traditional that everybody left their doors open in Smoky Hollow?

N: Oh yes, nobody locked their doors in those days.

M: Going back for a minute to when you were going to school, did you go to Rayen School?

N: Yes.

M: This was quite a distance from where you lived.

N: Right.

M: Did you go on the bus, or were you driven to school? Could you tell me just how you got to school?

N: We walked everyday and every night from the school. In zero weather, we walked all the way from Valley Street to Rayen. Our parents didn't have the money for the bus.

M: Could you have taken the bus if you had had the money?

N: If we had the money we could have taken the bus. It was three cents a ride.

M: That was one way?

N: Yes. That was a lot of money.

M: Did you on occasion take the bus?

N: No, I never took the bus.

M: When you went to grade school, it wasn't quite the distance, so did you walk to school as a youngster?

- N: We walked all the time. Even in zero weather, if we were very cold we wouldn't dare go back home, because we would get sent back to school. We had to keep on going to school. We couldn't say that it was too cold. We had to go to school. It was very important to all of us.
- M: You couldn't go half the way and then turn around and come back? You still had to keep going?
- N: Right. My mother bundled us up with scarves and gloves, boots and a very warm coat.
- M: Do you feel that there was any decade of your life that stands out most in your mind, and what was it like during that period?
- N: Yes. I started working when I was about thirteen years old in a grocery store owned by Sam DiGiacomo. I worked there for many years. So I have been working since I was thirteen years old. And I just, well if you want to call it, retired. I don't like that word, though. I just retired from grocery working as a clerk.
- M: But then, when you retire is maybe a good time to really start living.
- N: Right, that is what I am doing, I hope.
- M: Mrs. Nazarini, do you recall any part of the Depression?
- N: Yes, I recall it. It was pretty hard. They had the soup lines in those days for people to bring their pots and go get the soup. I remember that but I don't think my mother ever went for soup.
- M: Could you tell us a little bit about what you remember?
- N: A lot of people went with their pots to go get soup to eat, to survive.
- M: Where would they go to get this?
- N: I know they called it the soup line and I recall them going with their pots, but where they went I don't really remember. I think it was the YMCA.
- M: Do you have any idea who might have made this soup?

- N: The city. The city would get women to make soup.
- M: Then they would of course have to have something in the soup to make it nourishing.
- N: They had vegetables in the soup, I remember that. And beans which were good for you too. One other thing they had was a surplus store. They would go and get flour and dried beans and they would give this soup to the people to survive. They would give away butter and even clothing.
- M: Would you have to have some kind of a chip or ticket, or were these things considered Welfare then?
- N: They issued you a card which you would present and would entitle you to have flour, beans, or whatever.
- M: Was everybody entitled to this or did you have to be below a certain income level?
- N: Yes, below a certain income.
- M: But that didn't necessarily mean that you were on Welfare?
- N: No, at this time, they were unemployed and we had to survive.
- M: Of course there was quite a few unemployed people during that time. And again this was nationwide, not just in the Smoky Hollow?
- N: Yes, and that was during the time that Hoover was President, wasn't it?
- M: Yes, do you recall just what years that the soup lines were in existence?
- N: I think it was between 1930 and 1936. It ended in 1936.
- M: You were pretty much of a youngster yourself during that time, so I would imagine that the memory would be a little bit vague. Is there anything else that you can recall about your childhood or anything concerning Smoky Hollow that you would like to include here in this interview?
- N: I think I have covered what I can think of right now.
- M: All right I want to thank you very much for your interview.
- N: You are welcome.

End of Interview