

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Westlake Terrace Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 652

MICHAEL BERARDINELLI

Interviewed

by

Elisa Calabrese

on

October 22, 1985

MICHAEL NICHOLAS BERARDINELLI

Michael Nicholas Berardinelli was one of fourteen children born to Antonio and Concetta Berardinelli. Four have died; three sisters and Michael were born in Colorado; the others were born in Youngstown. Michael was born on April 18, 1918 in Pueblo, Colorado. At the age of eighteen months Michael, his mother and three sisters moved from Colorado to Youngstown, Ohio, living on Oak Street. The Berardinelli family moved to Prospect Street when Michael was four years old. Michael Berardinelli lived on Prospect Street until he was married to Evelyn on December 28, 1946.

A soldier in two Infantry Divisions, the 34th and the 3rd, he served in the United States Army from February 28, 1941 to December 1, 1945. Honors, awards, and other recognitions include: EAME Theater Ribbon with Bronze Star, American Defense Ribbon, and World War II Victory Medal.

Michael and Evelyn Berardinelli are members of Mount Carmel Catholic church in Youngstown. They have two children: Patricia, age 38, and Anthony, age 32.

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INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL BERARDINELLI

INTERVIEWER: Elisa Calabrese

SUBJECT: social activites, World War II, city and
urban life in the 1930's

DATE: October 22, 1985

C: This is an interview with Michael Berardinelli for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Westlake Terrace, by Elisa Calabrese, on October 22, 1985, at 7958 Market Street, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Just to get started tell me a little bit about yourself.

B: When I was born?

C: Yes, when you were born to the present.

B: I wsa born in Pueblo, Colorado. I came here when I was eighteen months old withmy mother and my three sisters. We came to Youngstown. We moved under to what they call the Oak Street Bridge now. There was no bridge at that time. I vaguely remember it because I was only four years old. Then I moved to Prospect Street and I stayed there until I got married.

I quit school when I was in eighth grade. I was fifteen yeras old. No, it was in April so I would have been sixteen years old. April 18th is my birthday.

Talking about the Westlake project that used to be the old circus ground there. They used to call it Wright Field I think, or something like that. The circus would come to town, and they had the old-fashioned parades. We kids would follow the parade down Federal Street, then follow it back to Wright Field. We would get jobs selling ballons and pop and other stuff. We also would have to get a note from our parents, to get excused from classes to go and see the parade.

HUD [Housing and Urban Development] originated here, didn't it?

C: Yes, in Youngstown.

B: I do not know if they called it HUD in those days. I remember the man that was the head of the project was named Mr. Strait. I don't remember his first name.

The government got the idea about building low cost housing. I think if I remember right, Youngstown was the first city in America to get it started. It was so important that one day we kids were sitting in the Park Theater watching a movie. After the movie, they would show what they called "The Fox News Reel". It would show the latest news events in the world. It showed the ground breaking ceremony for the Housing Project in Youngstown, Ohio. We kids got all excited because they were showing Youngstown, our home.

C: Do you remember anything about Westlake being built? You said you remembered the circus. Do you remember anything?

B: I remember that.

C: Could you tell us a little bit about that?

B: I remember them building it. At that time like I said it was mostly these people on welfare just like it is today. They pay so much. There are people living like that. The government pays like twenty percent or twenty-five percent of their rent because they have low income. That was the way that started. Where those buildings are today, though, I don't think originally they were there where they are at now. I think they moved them.

C: Some of them they did move when they built the freeway.

B: Yes, right. When they put that freeway there, they moved them. Didn't they sell some of them for \$1?

C: I don't know.

B: This would be maybe in the 1950's when they went to build the freeway. They had so much land just to move some of them. I think you could have bought them for \$1.

C: I never came across that.

B: That would have to be about the time they were putting that freeway in. I'm pretty sure that at one time you could have bought some of those buildings for \$1. They were just giving them away because they didn't have any-

place to put them. I think they were way more in those days than they are now.

C: Did you know anyone who lived there?

B: Yes, I knew a lot of them, but a lot of them aren't around here now. I knew quite a few of the families. They were hardworking, honest people. It just happened to be around the Depression time, and the only rent they could afford to pay . . . Most of the people were getting help from welfare which in those days they called Allied Council.

Were there colored people living there?

C: Oh, yes.

B: Very few then, right? This was between 1940 and 1945.

C: The break off point was Madison Avenue, wasn't it?

B: Yes.

C: The blacks lived on one side, and the whites lived on the other.

B: I couldn't tell you because I was in the Army, and I was not here during that time. When I came back, my friends still lived there. Then they started scaring them out because more of them started to go in there.

C: I thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW