

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Jackson Milton School Project

High School Experiences

O. H. 687

VIRGINIA LEHOTSKY

Interviewed

by

John Gulgas

on

May 7, 1985

YOUNGTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: VIRGINIA LEHOTSKY

INTERVIEWER: John Gulgas

SUBJECT: school activities, rural high school, high school  
in the 1950's

DATE: May 7, 1985

G: This is an interview with Virginia Lehotsky for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Jackson Milton School, by John Gulgas, on May 7, 1985, at 3:20 p.m.

I noticed that you had several things listed after your name [in the yearbook]. If you had to pick out an extra-curricular that would rate as number one, what would you pick?

L: Definitely band. I really like music and I enjoyed band. I had years and years and years of all kinds of music lessons, including piano.

G: What did band demand of you as a student timewise and energywise?

L: We all had lessons given at the school for which you had to prepare individually besides the amount of time that you spent with the band. I think it met something like three times a week.

G: Did you get into competitions like they do today?

L: Only on a quartet basis and that sort of thing, not the band as a whole. At that time our band was very small.

G: How many were in it?

L: I'm guessing maybe fifty. I was there when they had only the little capes with the white, satin lining and the hats that matched. That was it. However, we did

get uniforms later on.

G: You had to fund raise for those.

L: That's right.

G: I wonder what they cost in relation to today's dollar.

L: I really don't know what they cost.

G: What possessed you to join the rifle club?

L: I had a boyfriend who was really big with rifles. If you can't fight them, then join them.

G: Did you hit anything with the rifle?

L: Surprisingly I was not too bad. I was probably middle-of-the-road. I was not by any means the worst, but I was not the best.

G: What were some of your favorite subjects and teachers?

L: Probably one of my favorite teachers was Lucy Lauban. She was a good teacher. She was tough.

G: What was it about her class that was appealing to you or that you liked?

L: She wasn't a dull teacher, I guess. She quite often injected, because it was English, contemporary things into our class. Also, we studied a lot of the classics. I remember we spent six weeks on MacBeth and we all thought we were going to die. We found out that we really did enjoy it because when you spend six weeks on one play you really get into it. Another thing we did was Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. One of the things we had to do was pick out a character. Keep in mind this is an English class; there were no art classes at all in the high school at that time. We all groaned that it was just terrible that she would do this to us, but the drawings were not all that bad.

G: Now I am curious. Who did you draw?

L: I think I drew the poor parson.

G: Anything else about her class that you really enjoyed? How was it conducted? Was it pretty well under control?

L: Oh yes! If you knew Mrs. Lauban you would know that her classes were always under control. She had a good sense of humor, so that helped a lot.

G: What were some of the social school functions that you remember the most, dances and so forth?

L: The big thing in the Fall was always the homecoming dance, as it still is today I think. Besides the prom there was always a Spring formal called the May Dance. That was always a big thing with the queen and the whole bit. Sometimes there would just be dances with records.

G: What was a typical day in a high school, classes and so forth? If you had to walk through a day what would you remember first when you got off the bus, or didn't you ride the bus?

L: No, I rode the bus. It was better than walking. I lived a long way from the school. I remember that I had classes almost every period. My day was always filled. I graduated with five or six more credits than I had to have.

G: What was lunch time like? Were you a packer or buyer?

L: About fifty-fifty. I wasn't keen about packing lunches. Incidentally, I still don't like to pack lunches.

G: How about after-school or weekend hangouts, were there any that you frequented?

L: Of course, at that time there was the roller rink out at the lake. A lot of people went there. That was a good place to go. It was completely surrounded by bars. A lot of people were very concerned about the fact that there were so many bars, but I would say that probably out of my class of thirty-nine maybe ten kids' parents owned bars. There were kids in and out of bars a lot, not that they were served, but the family was there. In a good share of them, the parents that owned the bars policed who got the drinks. You almost couldn't buy a drink because the parents owned the bars and they said something like--Get out of here, I'll give you a grape Nehi.

G: What was a night at the roller rink like?

L: For one thing they had an organist who played the organ. The organ was there and one of the girls who graduated from JM played the organ out there. There was no piped in disco. There was an actual organ and somebody playing, which I think was unusual. There was a small beach down behind. You took your bathing suit with you and a bunch of us went down and went swimming after skating.

G: How about around here, were there any after-school hangouts that you frequented?

L: Gee, there just wasn't much here, just the Isaly store.

G: I guess you had to go to Austintown on a date?

L: Yes, but generally we went into Youngstown.

G: As you look back, is there anything that you would have done over again, or perhaps something would have made it even more enjoyable as an experience in high school?

L: George Burns says, "If you live right, you only have to go through it once." I don't believe in looking back and saying, "Gee, I should have done this."

G: I noticed that you ended with this quote [in the yearbook], "Never say die."

L: Right.

G: Have you lived by that? Are you still using that quote?

L: I think that if you make up your mind that you are going to do something, then you do it. I just don't believe in trying something once and saying, "Gee, it didn't work out." Of course, there comes a time when you say to yourself-- Well, this perhaps was not meant to be.

G: How did you get the nickname VIP?

L: Nobody ever really called me that. Somebody stuck that in the yearbook.

G: Were you a very important person?

L: No.

G: What fads do you remember the most?

L: I remember these absolutely horrendous socks. You got these really long socks and you rolled them down until you had this huge innertube of a sock around your ankle. The bigger that innertube was, the more stylish you were. Doesn't it sound awful?

G: I don't remember bobby socks. Were there saddle shoes to go with them?

L: Of course.

G: Did you polish your saddle shoes?

L: No.

G: They were supposed to be scuffed?

L: That is right.

G: You lived through some interesting times, the Truman-Dewey election of 1948, the beginning of the Korean War, and even the first U.S. Steel strike. Do any of those strike a chord with you? Do you remember what you were doing at any of those or did they just pass by because you were too busy having fun?

L: No, but the thing that I remember the most from that era are the McCarthy hearings. I was in high school at the time of the McCarthy hearings and they were televised. It was one of the first political things that was ever televised. I can remember going home from school every day and watching the McCarthy hearings. They were absolutely fascinating. At that time I thought--How can these people be taken in by this man? Whenever I really think of high school and what was going on politically I always think of the McCarthy hearings because that man scared me to death.

G: Describe any practical jokes that were either played on you or by you. Are there any that you remember?

L: I remember there was a time when a bunch of us were involved in a play. This one kid had to deliver some newspapers every day, but all the newspapers at that time had to be all rolled up a certain way. He threw them from the car. The only way he could be in the play was if he had somebody to help him roll. A whole bunch of us piled in and some were rolling and some were throwing and he is driving down the street. We were throwing these papers out of the windows up to the porches so he could get to be in the play. It is really not a practical joke, but I do remember rolling these newspapers for weeks on end while there was play practice.

G: Now that you mention it, and the other classmates who I have been talking to, it is very typical because it sounded like you were one, big, happy family and you did things like that.

L: Right. We were a very close class. Several years ago at one of the Imagemaker dinners it was our thirtieth anniversary. We had not had a get-together for maybe five years. At that time everyone was calling trying to stimulate interest in the Imagemakers because I think it is a fine program. Our class had the most there, after thirty years. So we were a very close class. (Imagemakers is an honorary-- a JM Hall of Fame).

G: What about senior farewell activities, were there any of those that were big? Did you have a senior skip day?

L: No. I enjoyed school a lot, but when I graduated there were no tears. I was glad to graduate. I just remember it being a very happy time.

G: The last thing is the senior trip to Washington.

L: I forgot about that.

G: What do you remember about that?

L: I had never been on a train, and of course we took the train. We thought we were so very elegant eating in the dining car. It was really wonderful. I had never been to Washington, D.C. so I loved that part of it. I was irritated that some of the guys went out and got drunk. I was amused at the ones that filled the balloons with water and dropped them out of the eighth floor hotel window on people; their aim was awful. I remember I was so tired.

G: Did you get to see the President?

L: No, but I think we did go through areas of the White House that are now closed off. They used to take tours of people through the White House on the whole first floor, but now I think it is really limited because of the number of assassinations and so forth. I was really impressed with the White House. I thought it was really beautiful. I really enjoyed the trip.

G: Are there any other memories you have?

L: I think the most important thing is that we all think we have to go to these big schools that have an offering of thirty-two different classes, and if there isn't a swimming pool at the school and if they don't have all these fantastic facilities then you are not going to get a good education. That is not true. I guess that is the thing I come away with. I think that coming from a small school is a distinct advantage.

G: Thank you.

L: Thank you, John.

END OF INTERVIEW