

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Westlake Terrace Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 718

CLINGAN JACKSON

Interviewed

by

Joseph Rochette

on

October 24, 1985

CLINGAN JACKSON

Clingan Jackson was born on March 28, 1907 in Coitsville Township, the son of John Calvin and Evalena Clingan Jackson. He was raised in Lowellville and graduated from Lowellville High School. After graduation he attended the University of Colorado and received an A.B. degree in history in 1929. Jackson then returned to the Youngstown-Lowellville area and began a 54 year career as a feature writer for the Vindicator in Youngstown, covering all the major labor and political events during the period.

Mr. Jackson also led an active political life from the 1930's through the 1950's. His career included several important state offices: State representative (1935-1936), state senator (1944-1950), President-Ohio Program Committee, Ohio Pardon and Parole Commission, and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. Jackson is a member of several local organizations, including the Youngstown Kiwanis and the Youngstown Torch Club. He is also a member and Elder of Coitsville Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Jackson retired from the Vindicator in 1983 and is living at the family homestead on 350 Jacobs Road in Youngstown with his present wife, Mrs. Loretta Fitch Jackson. He has two children from his previous marriage: Mrs. Susan Ehas and Mrs. Maryann Hall. Throughout his illustrious career, Mr. Jackson has met such luminaries as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Al Smith, Robert Taft, and H. L. Mencken.

Joseph Rochette

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INTERVIEWEE: CLINGAN JACKSON

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Rochette

SUBJECT: city-urban politics, newspaper writing,
strikes, low income housing, national
political figures

DATE: October 24, 1985

R: This is an interview with Mr. Clingan Jackson for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Westlake Terrace, by Joe Rochette, on October 24, 1985, at 350 Jacobs Road, Youngstown, Ohio, at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Tell us a little bit about yourself, where, when you were born, about growing up, where you went to school, that kind of thing.

J: I was born in 1907 in Coitsville Township in a portion of it which is now in Youngstown having been annexed in the 1920's. I lived on a farm until 1919. As a result of the war my father had located at Carbon Limestone Company to operate sawmills. We moved. The family didn't join him until 1919 at Carbon over in Pennsylvania near Hillsville.

We located there in 1919, and it was an entirely different environment from Coitsville. There were rows of small company houses where many of the men who had been brought from Europe as workmen . . . Many of the men were single. Some of them had begun to bring their wives over and establish families. There were still quite a few of them living in boarding houses.

I, as a boy of about twelve years old, got thrown into the foreign background. I began working in a store that stayed open all the time on Sundays and nights. The people who owned and operated the store couldn't write English very well, so I used to help keep the books and that sort of thing even as a boy. I came to know them, and most of

them were Croatians. I even picked up a good deal of the Croatian language.

When I was about thirteen, I got a job in the summertime with my cousin. The two of us did surveying of the carbon property, and over land they had anticipated using for limestone quarry. We put in a cross section that covered miles of territory in Poland Township and over in Pennsylvania.

After that I worked painting in the summertime. I painted buildings sometimes just by myself. I painted the dust plant and the tressels, tall sheet metal buildings. It was a rough job of painting. You covered everything with paint. Sometimes I painted as much as thirty or forty gallons of paint in a day.

After that I got a job in the summertime at the dust plant. My job was basically to fill orders. We filled a type of limestone that they used in agriculture. It wasn't the dust, but more of a fine grained limestone that they sold by the ton. We had this little gasoline engine to load them. I learned to operate the gasoline engine.

Mahoning Township didn't have a high school, and Mahoning Township paid my tuition to Lowellville High School. I went to Lowellville High School. I had to walk. It was about a two and a half mile walk. Since I took chemistry in my junior and senior years I got a job with Ohio Edison Company in the laboratory down in Lowellville.

Then for a time I worked putting in railroad ties and digging bases for the ties. Then jobs didn't look so good. One spring when I was going to college, I got a job with Pennsylvania Power Company in New Castle. I walked from Carbon down to the Youngstown-New Castle streetcar line to go to New Castle. I worked in a line gang, one of those pole setting trucks. We would go out and dig the holes for the poles and put them up. We dug the holes and set the poles from New Castle on down to Ellwood City along the Beaver River.

After I graduated from Lowellville High School in 1925 I went to Boulder, Colorado for four years to the University of Colorado. I graduated there in 1929 in history and English. I came back and went to work for Ohio Edison Company in the accounting department. I worked there about three months. I had wanted to be a newspaperman. I had asked for a job at the Telegram and the Vindicator. They were the two papers. In the fall I got a call from the Vindicator and they gave me a job. The financial outlook was even worse than it was at Ohio Edison. It wasn't Ohio Edison then. It was the Allied Power. I stayed at the Vindicator for fifty-four years.

I graduated pretty well up in my class at the university. I came back here and then I married and I moved to Lowellville. A few days after I had moved there, I was working at the Vindicator by that time, one of the councilmen died. I wrote an obituary for our paper. Then I wrote a little editorial. So the council decided to put me in to replace him. I became a Lowellville councilman a few days after I moved into the town.

In 1928 the Smith campaign had allowed the democrats of Mahoning County to organize more effectively. Herbert Hoover carried Mahoning County in 1932 by 5,000 votes. The democrats did better than they had for a long time.

The democratic chairman was anxious to get democratic wins in 1934. He looked around to select candidates. They picked them from all over the county. It was kind of a geographical selection. There was one from Sebring; there was one from North Lima, one from Lowellville, a couple from Youngstown, one from Struthers. They put up a fight. They picked me. I think they picked me because I was writing the column for the Vindicator then, a daily column. Low and behold in 1934 the democrats came in. I was elected in 1934 to the Ohio House of Representatives. At that time I was made political editor of the Vindicator, which at that time was a democratic paper. A few years later it became an independent paper. Until the 1940's it was officially a democratic paper.

In 1936 I ran for Congress and was defeated. In 1938 I ran for state senator. In the 1940's I was elected to the state senate. I was there for six years. I became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. I left the Senate in 1950. I was appointed to the Ohio Program Commission; I had been president of it during my last year in the senate. I was appointed along with Arthur Fleming, who later served in Eisenhower's cabinet, and Professor White. There were three public appointees, and I was one of them.

I was appointed to the Ohio Highway Construction Council as its chairman. We traveled the 18,000 miles of Ohio state highways and classified them and authorized the engineer studies for the highways. The Highway Council lasted until about 1957, and I left that. I never asked for a state job after that, but the republican governor appointed me to the parole board. I served on the parole board for about three and a half years under Governor O'Neill.

After that I was appointed to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission by Governor Rhodes without any requests. In fact, I told him that I wasn't interested, but he insisted. I served on the Ohio Civil Rights Commission for twenty-two years.

From 1963 until 1985, during all of that time, I served the Vindicator as its political editor. I wrote the Sunday column. Prior to that I wrote a labor column. I covered the 1937 steel strike in Youngstown. Prior to that I had written a daily column for the Vindicator. Esther Hamilton wrote one for the Telegram. When we joined, they took Esther's column and put me in as political editor in 1963.

Earlier than that I had written "Man on the Monument". It was a column that appeared on Sundays, which wasn't originated by me, but it involved the "Man on the Monument" in Central Square and the "Maid on the Fountain". There was a fountain over on the north side of the square. The "Maid" and the "Man on the Monument" came down off of their pedestals at midnight and did not get back on their pedestal until dawn. It covered what went on. Originally, it was a little bit inclined to gossip. When I wrote it, I made it mostly a historical memory type of thing. I was just a young fellow then. I remember going up the steps an old man came along. He said that he wanted to see the "Man on the Monument". I told him that I was the "Man on the Monument". I had written all of this historical stuff.

That was the early part of my newspaper career. In this process I had advantages that only, I think, the Mahoning Valley could provide. I had been born in an old American family. I grew up on a farm, and my father operated a farm and a sawmill here. The house that I was born in was entirely timber. Everything else was made there, and the lumber was cut there. The farm was almost self-sustaining. It had everything. I grew up in that. Then I was transferred to a carbon company, house company, store type of set-up. Then I came back to Lowellville, which was a booming community at that time. It was a period when Jitoney buses ran, dozens of them from Bessemer and Hillsville to Lowellville. Subsequently, Hillsville had a line to Youngstown when the streetcars were gone.

I worked for the Vindicator and I also taught at the university for about twenty years at Youngstown College and for a couple of years after it became Youngstown State University.

- R: You mentioned that you had covered the 1937 steel strike while you were at the Vindicator. What were some of the events, things that were involved in that, like how it started?
- J: In 1932 with the Roosevelt administration they set out to kind of clear the way for the organization of unions. The Amalgamated Iron, Steel, and Tin Works came in and organized some additional locals in about 1933 or 1934. They didn't pan out too well. Company unions were in existence at the time.

In about 1935 the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations)

was formed with John L. Lewis as the head of it. The Amalgamated Iron, Steel, and Tin Works was one of the unions, along with various others that were in the formation of the CIO. They began organizing locals.

I was a labor reporter at the time. I met the union people sent in here to organize. John Mayo, for example, had been with the United Mine Workers. He came here as the head of the organization of the local steel unions. Under his direction 1330, 1331, 1462 were three of the original big unions here that were formed. By 1937 it developed the steel strike. The steel strike was called in Youngstown by Philip Murray. He came here with about 1,000 in attendance, and he made the call for the steel strike.

Shortly after that a group of organizers came into Mayo's office. Among them was Gus Hall and Shorty Steubens or Stevenson. I happened to be in Mayo's office. John L. Lewis never was a communist, but he hired communist organizers. They were the only people who had the know-how or training to begin the organization.

Anyway, Stevenson or Steubens, whom I knew . . . In about 1930 or 1931 on Decoration Day the communists put on a parade in Youngstown. It organized down at Basin Street. Youngstown had mounted police at that time on horses. They got down there, and they attempted to break it up. Unfortunately, there was a pile of bricks, and they threw bricks. I think they treated seventy at South Side Hospital. They were mostly minor injuries. I don't remember anyone being too seriously injured. They knocked those police off of those horses. Being a very brave reporter, I had crawled under a car. Andrews Avenue extended across Basin Street at that time. Right at the corner I crawled under the car. There was another guy under the car, and that was Steubens. When he came into Mayo's office years later, they introduced him as Stevenson. I told him that I knew who he was.

Anyway, Shorty Steubens was here during the strike and so was Gus Hall. One of the sharpest operations was along Poland Avenue at Stop Five. Stop Five was where the real rioting broke out. That night I was down there. I had a photographer with me, Ed Salt. There was a fire station on Poland Avenue. We kind of operated out of the fire station. We started down the sidewalk, and there was a big bush to the side. There were police and shotguns and shells. Something came through that bush and took every leaf right in front of me. I decided that it was time for retreat. I went back to the fire station, but Salt kept on taking pictures and got shot. I thought that I had an obligation to him, so I went out to get him. He had a white shirt on because we all wore white shirts to work then. It was just totally bloody. I got him in the car. I

started it up, and the road was completely blocked off. I got out and negotiated with the operators to take a wounded man out. I got him out. I got him to South Side Hospital. I called the paper and told them that he was alright except for possible lead poisoning. They told me to go back, so I went back.

I decided that I couldn't get through that barricade. I decided to go around and come down Powers Way. There was a mob descending to Poland Avenue, and they had clubs, pitchforks, and every other thing. They were coming, and I got in the middle of them. I just coasted along with them. I got down to the bottom and I ran across the street. At that time the lights had been shot out all along the street. I saw the union headquarters. I had been there before. I jumped in the door, and Gus Hall was there. We were there all night. At about 11:00 the next day it calmed down, so I got out.

Anyway, that was the strike. I guess it started out when a truckload of deputies came down through there. I guess they thought they mistreated some women or something and then it started. They were shooting across the street both ways. Somebody was up in the mill shooting. They weren't trying to hit anybody, but they shot out all of the lights. The gasoline station across the street had every window shot out. Shortly after that the national guard came in.

In the strike I became pretty close at that time to Phil Murray and Sweeney who was the press secretary for the United Steelworkers at the time. We became quite friendly. I was always close to them. Years later they called upon me to write an article for the operations in Scandinavia. I told Sweeney, "I'm on the outs with the CIO here. They condemned me." They had a whole page ad in 1948 when I was running for senate. He said, "That doesn't make any difference. We know you; you write it." I wrote it for him; they paid me for it. I always had a pretty close relationship with them, but I couldn't get along with some of them here at that time.

- R: We have been doing some research on the Westlake Terrace projects that were built down there on Federal Street. One of the things that we were having trouble figuring out was why at that time . . . Youngstown was selected to have that federal project here. We were having trouble figuring out why. Maybe you know something about the political side of that and why.
- J: Youngstown Sheet & Tube operated many company houses. McDonald, for example, was built for steel houses, company houses. I told you about the carbon limestone. It was the time where they moved for divestment of them. If you notice, they don't own them now. Those houses have been sold. Some-

times it was to private individuals, and sometimes it was to real estate investors of some kind. It was the time when there was great emphasis on adequate housing. Also it was a time when relief came in 1933 in November. Then subsequently the WPA (Works Progress Administration), PWA (Public Works Administration), and so forth came in.

This national act for housing developed. There was a lot of opposition to the establishment of Westlake Crossing. They had a debate on the idea of the old American idea. They thought that you built your own home. Youngstown was, even then, a city of wide home ownership and still is. People are living in the homes that they own. They finally got through and built the Westlake housing. After all this experience of building houses and a lot of the others, history has been given its final verdict on how wise some of these things are. I own this house, and this house was built for half the cost of a unit at Westlake housing. If you will check the record, you will find that a unit in Westlake housing was about \$13,000. That was a lot of money for a house in those days. My house cost about \$6,400. The theory was that when the government does things it costs too much. They work out in history, but sometimes we do uneconomic things.

R: During the 1930's especially in the local politics in Youngstown itself, can you think of the names of some of the people that you remember who were mayors or councilmen or whoever from this area here?

J: When I first went to the Vindicator, Joseph L. Hefferman was an attorney. He tried a national figure. He was in the Bonus March in Washington. He went down there, and he was a speaker and writer of considerable ability. He was kind of an important figure. Ed Moore of Youngstown had managed James Cox's campaign for the presidency in 1920 when FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) was the vice-presidential candidate. Ed Moore was regarded as the democratic boss of Ohio even at that time. He died in the 1920's.

Joseph L. Heffernan became mayor. After Joseph L. Heffernan, Ed Moore's son Mark Moore became mayor of Youngstown. Mark Moore had a water commissioner by the name of Dan Parish. Dan Parish became the right hand of David Lawrence of Pennsylvania who became the governor of Pennsylvania and before that the mayor of Pittsburgh. Dan Parish had been his right hand all the way. He had been a Youngstown contractor, but he went to Pittsburgh and became quite a famous figure in Pennsylvania politics.

In 1921 Youngstown had elected George L. Oles as an independent candidate for mayor back in the 1920's when the parties were still nominating candidates. In 1923 Youngstown

had adopted a city charter for home rule. It provided for a nonpartisan election and four year terms for the mayors. Beginning in 1923 up until the 1940's they were nonpartisan mayors supposedly, but the parties always endorsed them. In 1923 Charlie Scheibel was elected as the first one. He was regarded as a Ku Klux Klan mayor, but when he became mayor, he appointed more Catholics than any of the previous mayors. He was regarded as a pretty decent fellow all the way around. There was more closeness.

In 1927 a Catholic became mayor, Joseph L. Heffernan. Then Mark Moore. After Mark Moore they elected Lionel Evans; he was a park commissioner and a republican. After Lionel Evans they elected William Spagnola. And after him it was Ralph O'Neill.

In the process with this nonpartisan type sometimes you had fourteen or fifteen candidates for council. There was one incident, if I remember right, where a councilman was elected with about fifteen percent or sixteen percent of the votes. Even the mayors were elected with only thirty-some percent because there would sometimes be seven or eight candidates for mayor. So there became a movement to find some way of establishing a mayor and other city officials who had obtained at least the affirmation of a majority.

In the early 1940's we had a charter revision which provided for party elections. O'Neill was the first one elected under that in 1943. Then he served four years, but at the end of his term they revised it for two year terms. Then he was defeated for reelection and Charles Henderson came next who was a republican. That revision provided for nominations by the parties. Since then we have had only mayors elected who were affiliated officially through the nomination process by either the republicans or the democrats.

Interestingly enough, it has been about an even division. Henderson, the republican, served three terms; Frank Kryzan, a democrat, served three terms; Frank Franko, democrat, served one term; Harry Sebastian, a republican, served one term; Anthony Flask, a democrat, served three terms; Jack Hunter, a republican, served four terms. During that time you even had republican control a few years in the council. Despite the democratic persuasion of Youngstown voters, when it comes to electing city officials, they seem to recognize that the two parties are instruments for government and not ideological vehicles. They tend to go for the candidate that they think will serve them best regardless of party affiliation on municipal elections. That is very evident because even in the worst republican swing nationally, the city of Youngstown gave McGovern a couple of thousand majority.

- R: Wasn't it during the 1930's when Michael Kirwan was first elected to Congress in the House of Representatives?
- J: Kirwan was first elected in 1936. I was runner-up against him for the nomination.
- R: That is what I wondered because I knew he had been . . .
- J: He served for thirty-four years; before him, a republican, John H. Cooper, had served for twenty-two years. After Kirwan, Charles Carney served six years. Then Lyle Williams two terms and now we have Traficant.
- R: I suppose during the 1930's and 1940's in the times of 1932 and 1936, the years of the presidential elections, that those were really . . . especially in this area or all around the country everybody was getting excited about nominations as far as presidential candidates and stuff like that. Would there be local headquarters and things that would put up literature or distribute buttons and things like that for Roosevelt or whoever?
- J: Definitely. There were local headquarters. Historically the headquarters have been located downtown. Republicans have sometimes had their headquarters on a whole floor in the Dollar Savings & Trust Company building. Democrats had an old furniture factory across from the courthouse. They used to have a whole floor in it for their democratic headquarters. Usually both the republicans and democrats have had their campaign headquarters in presidential campaigns, and they still do. Some of them have tended to go to the outskirts in recent years. It used to always be downtown, and they always had literature and buttons. It was surprising to find the number of workers who were working for both parties. They would go in and distribute literature and so forth.
- R: Did any of the candidates during those years ever come through Youngstown?
- J: Yes. Kennedy came here; Carter came here; Stevenson came here. Roosevelt never came here during a campaign. He came here, however, in 1937 or 1938 to inspect the mills. Maybe it was even later than that. It could have been 1939. Anyway, it was the case of stirring up interest in the need for national defense that he came. Hoover passed through here in 1932 on his train. He spoke from a platform. Dewey, I only remember him speaking at New Castle. Know, the vice-presidential candidate, came here in 1936. Landon came through here through the Pennsylvania Station on his way to West Middlesex to accept the nomination in 1936. Truman has been here, but he wasn't here during a presidential campaign. Once one of our reporters found him in the Purple Cow having

breakfast and milk there and gave him a ride out to the airport. That was after he was president.

R: In working with the Vindicator you probably got to meet a lot of different people. It probably wasn't only politicians, but other people in the area who, for one reason or another, had some fame or whatever like that. As far as being a reporter and editor and political editor and things for the Vindicator, what were some of the memories that you have about that, maybe just the Vindicator and writing for a newspaper itself?

J: I think one of the memories is that newspaper work has its compensations as well as its disabilities. One of the compensations is that you get to meet some of the important figures of your time. For example, I suspect that during that time I met more of the important figures of the newspaper. I got sent out and I ran into them. I've met every president beginning with Hoover. I had a chance to talk with him for a little, not that they remember me or anything, but at least I met with them. I rode on the train with Roosevelt.

The other thing is that you get in contact with other people. One time at the national convention the fellow at my left was Walter Lippman and the fellow at my right taking notes was David Lawrence of U. S. News and World Report.

You run into other things. Of course, during that period I did general reporting too. A famous violinist, recently decorated by the West German government, came to town, and I spent an afternoon with him at the Ohio Hotel. They didn't allow anybody, but they allowed me in to see him for ten minutes and he kept me all afternoon. He wanted somebody to talk to; he was just a young fellow then.

Of course, I suppose the person who impressed me most was republican Senator Robert Taft. I had an opportunity to be with him a good deal. In 1940 he was the runner-up for the presidential nomination. He came to town.

R: In those days conventions were pretty colorful things, not like they are now. Everything is planned now. It seemed like in those days they were more spontaneous.

J: Yes, the convention itself did much on choosing the presidential candidate. What you have now is all of these primaries that are set up before the convention is held.

One of the things that bothers me is that I remember when 70,000 plus votes were passed for mayor over the city of Youngstown. Now the population of the city of Youngstown is not much in excess of 70,000.

R: What do you remember about downtown, the city of Youngstown just being there during that period? I know then that it was a lot different than it is now in downtown. It seems like things are almost dead. Things were bustling, I suppose, with people just being there.

J: One thing I remember is that the streetcars were lined up in the Square, dozens of them, to handle the crowds in the evening hours and so forth. The Erie train station where a train would come in every hour or so serviced between Pittsburgh and Cleveland. East Federal Street was completely lined with stores on both sides. It was full with places of business. Boardman Street was a tenderloin district. The tenderloin district contained houses of ill repute and so forth. There was also the Monkey's Nest.

You had all of these characteristics of a teaming town. One time there was one, two, three, four, five, six, seven theaters operating in downtown Youngstown. There was the State Theater, the Dome Theater, the Liberty, the Hippodrome, the Palace, the Regency; all of those theaters operated. Of course, there wasn't any television or radio.

There were restaurants. Youngstown had fine restaurants. It had Ravers. It had an entrance where the Mahoning Bank is and also from Boardman Street. They operated in such a manner that they finally caught one guy who I knew who was going in one side, eating a meal, and then walking out the other side and getting a bill for coffee on the other side and paying the coffee bill and getting away with that.

Anyway, Tod House and Hotel Ohio were filled with staffs and people operating. Youngstown Hotel was full with people, and it had a nice restaurant. There was a nice restaurant on West Federal Street. Oles' Market operated across from the city hall. You also could get it from Boardman Street, and you also could get it from the Square. There were a lot of places. Across from the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) there was a saloon. The YMCA always liked it there because it was a well-operated place.

R: Youngstown has always been, I guess, that a lot of ethnic groups . . . There are a lot of different areas in the city where it seems like certain ethnic groups lived there.

J: They kind of concentrated. There was a Polish neighborhood; there was the Croatian neighborhood and Slovak areas and Hungarian areas and Italian districts. Now they are pretty well spread among each other. They were that way. Youngstown had seventy nationalities. That was from a study I made back in the 1930's. I wrote stories about them. The Slovak group is a very big group in Youngstown. German group is big. Welsh is another area. The older the group in its

settlement, the more dispersed it became.

R: For somebody running for office in that kind of an environment, would that have any particular difficulties as far as if you are from one ethnic group and you are trying to get votes from all of these different . . .

J: Voting in Youngstown still persists to too great an extent in being oriented according to nationality and background. You can sometimes predict how a precinct will vote based on the nationalities of its constituencies.

R: Can you think of anything else that you would like to add or say that you haven't mentioned?

J: No, I can't think of anything else. I think Youngstown will gradually come back. It will be a different city than it has been. I think it will be a more attractive place to live.

R: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW