

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

WOMEN'S HISTORY

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

O. H. 1788

MARAGRET PALAGYI

INTERVIEWED

BY

BETH BURR

ON

FEBRUARY 26, 1996

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: MARAGRET PALAGYI

INTERVIEWER: Beth Burr

SUBJECT: Women's History

DATE: February 26, 1996

B: This is an interview for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Women's History with Margaret Palagyi by Beth Burr. The interview is being done at Margaret's home in Conneaut, Ohio on February 26, 1996. Tell me about your childhood. Where did you grow up and what did you do for fun?

Tell me about your parents and your family.

P: I grew up on Mills street in Conneaut. I wasn't the only child in the neighborhood. I counted the other night and there were thirty kids on the block. We didn't have to go outside the neighborhood. We had all the kids we needed. We played hide-and-go-seek almost every night of the week. We would put on shows and have parades. In the wintertime we would build forts. We would put apples across the road and let the cars ride across them.

B: To see how many would hit?

P: To see how many they would hit. We didn't have to go outside the neighborhood then. We didn't have organized sports like they do now. We didn't have cars. I don't think that anyone in the neighborhood had a car. So we stayed right there with all the kids and grew up with them. The boys would play baseball and the girls would play house. We never went out of the block. If we did it was an occasion. Every once in a while the neighbor would take a bunch of us kids down to the beach. He did have a car. There were 16 kids on our side of the street.

B: What was the age range of all the kids?

P: I think it was pre-school to those who were out of school. After we were all done playing, the neighbor would make a great big bowl of popcorn and call all the kids over to eat some. She would cut up cantaloupe and put a few scoop of ice

cream in it.

B: What about school? Did you go to elementary school and on up?

P: I went to old Main Street School, which they have since torn down. You never had to walk to school alone. There was always a gang of kids going together. In the spring we would run home for lunch and in the winter we would take our lunch in a brown paper bag and eat at school. After 6<sup>th</sup> grade there was one room over at the junior high for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The ones that lived the closest to the junior high were the ones that were able to go there. I happen to have been one of them. The others had to go to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the grade schools.

B: The high school was 8<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade then?

P: High school started at 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Junior high was 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades while the high school was 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The junior high was about a half a block from where I lived.

B: What did you do after high school?

P: I went to Cleveland to be a nurse's aid at Rainbow Hospital until I decided to go into nursing. I worked there for two years and I enjoyed it. It was fun. They moved the hospital from South Euclid to University.

B: I didn't know that it had been moved.  
Tell me about nursing school. Where there very many male nurses at that time?

P: No. They had very few even male attendants. When I went into nursing we had male attendant for the men's ward, but no male nurses.

B: Things have really changed then.

P: Yes, but only for the best. There were a lot of restrictions. We had to live at the nurse's home. Nowadays, you can live at your own home. At that time you couldn't even be married. At the nurse's home you even had a curfew. You couldn't have any male visitors go passed the living room area.

B: That just wouldn't work today!

P: No way, not today! That was just the way it was. No questions asked. We would only have a half a day off and you could do too much with that little time.

B: How much money were you making?

P: That's when I was in training.

- B: Oh, so you weren't working and getting paid.
- P: They paid us seven dollars a month. We had to use it if we broke a syringe or dropped anything. If we did any damages the money would come out of the seven dollars. Some of us never had any money coming to us.
- B: That is amazing!  
Where did you go to school at?
- P: Ashtabula.
- B: Did you have to live in housing there?
- P: They had a nurse's dormitory. It was a nice home. Between the nurse's home and the hospital was a tunnel. You wouldn't have to go outside. You could just walk through the tunnel.
- B: It was safer.
- P: I often wonder about how safe something like that would be today.
- B: True. It probably would not be very safe. People would find a way into it. That probably wasn't even a concern then.
- P: The first six months we had to wear black stockings.
- B: Black stockings? Why?
- P: Yeah. We had to wear black stockings with our uniforms.
- B: Was it because you were new?
- P: They called use the probes. Then we got our caps, but there wasn't any ribbon on them until we graduated. When we graduated we were given a black ribbon. After six months we graduated from being a probe to a student. We were able to wear white stockings.
- B: Things have changed a lot.
- P: Things have changed very much. A lot of times you walk into a hospital and you don't even know who the nurses are. I suppose the have their points, but I like to see a nice white uniform with white tights and a cap. I don't think any of them wear caps anymore.
- B: No.

- P: Some of the older ones do, but when they retire that will all end. You can't even tell between the nurses and the nurse's aids anymore.
- B: Nowadays, they wear light colored jeans and bright colors. Did you just have general training?
- P: Yes, general training.
- B: Did you have the specialized nurses like we do today?
- P: We didn't specialize in anything. They had nurse's go to Columbus for pediatrics. Some went to Massillon for psychiatric nursing. They had all the same subjects as they do now, but there wasn't that specialization in nursing.
- B: You learned it all and went where you were needed.
- P: That's right.
- B: Did the Depression affect your family at all?
- P: I don't think so. My dad was one of the lucky ones that worked. Everyone went through it, but we always had enough to eat. We really didn't feel like we were suffering.
- B: What did you do after nursing school?
- P: I worked at Brown Memorial in Conneaut until 1945.
- B: And then what happened?
- P: I went to Louisiana and got married.
- B: How did you meet your husband?
- P: I met him in my mother's living room. He came to visit my brother. They were going to the basketball game and I wanted to go with them. When we got there they made me pay their way. That was the first meeting. I can't remember the second.
- B: Did you continue to date after you went back to Cleveland?
- P: I think he went to play ball. I can't remember the next time I saw him. He went into the service.
- B: Then you went to Louisiana to get married?

- P: Yes. What a trip that was! Lots of snow. It took us a long time. About five hours. I went to Cleveland because I thought I would miss connections. Then the train I was taking to St. Louis was late.
- B: Where did you go after Louisiana?
- P: We went from Alexandria, Louisiana to Baltimore. I got there before him and then he had to go back into the service. I went back home to Conneaut until he finally came home.
- B: When did he finally come home?
- P: He was home before July 4<sup>th</sup>. After he was home he got transferred to Fort Jackson.
- B: Did you work down there?
- P: Yes, I did private duty. Then we came back to Conneaut. We stayed with family until we got our apartment on Madison Street and then we moved here in 1946 and have been here ever since.
- B: Did you work after you came back to Conneaut?
- P: I went to work for Dr. Brown.
- B: For how long?
- P: For twenty years. He was good to work for. He was a good boss and a good doctor.
- B: What did you do about daycare?
- P: They didn't have that back then. We had to hire someone to take care of Michael.
- B: Was it uncommon for women to work and have a child?
- P: More women began to work when WWII began. They took over for the men in almost all areas. There weren't that many working when I was in the office. Families seemed to have managed.
- B: Do you have any role models?
- P: Helen, my sister. There is only one person like her.
- B: What do you do today to keep active?

P: I didn't go back to volunteering this year, but I would like to do something like that again.

B: Tell me about the group you have that gets together.

P: The nurses get together. We try to go to different places each time.

B: Is this from your class.

P: Yes. There were only sixteen in the class and only about ten of us go out. We play cards every Saturday night with Mike's brother and his wife.

B: What about your adopted grandchildren?

P: Eric is working at the theater and Jodi is working at the childcare center. They're growing up.

B: How long have they lived there?

P: Jodi is 19, so I think about 23 years. Mike would take Eric to the bus stop.

B: What about baking?

P: I made cookies Saturday.

B: How many cookies do you make for Christmas every year?

P: About 500. I enjoy doing it. I really hate trying new recipes. I try to make cookies every week.

B: Do you vote?

P: Definitely.

B: I ask that because women haven't always had that right. Women have taken such a huge step in politics and I just wondered what you thought about that.

P: I think that they go to far.

B: How?

P: As far as social manners, they should leave to men. Just little things.

B: What about equality in the work place?

P: I think that they should be paid the same amount. I do think that there are some

jobs that women should just leave alone. Women just aren't as strong as men.

B: Do you think we should have a women president? Do you want one?

P: Right now, I don't think so. If we do, it will be far in the future.

B: Anything else that you would like to add?

P: No.

B: I think I asked everything I needed to ask.

P: Okay.

B: Thank you for your time.

End of Interview.