

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles, Ohio

Personal Experience

O H 893

MARY C. HUBBARD

Interviewed

by

Beth Kantor

on

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K This is an interview with Mary Hubbard for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Niles, Ohio, by Beth Kantor, at the Community Nursing Home, on February 10, 1984, at 10:00 a.m

Do you want to tell me when you were born, the date, and a little bit about your early childhood?

H Well, I was born in Niles, Ohio, on Smith Street. That is around the bend there. My mother came up to bury her brother, and that is how I happened to be born in Niles. At that time, there were the B & O tracks down here and Erie tracks up here. Across the road was the Bostwick Metal Lath.

K Where was your mother originally from?

H My mother was born in Niles, but my father was born in Windham, Ohio. When I was a child, I played in that Bostwick. It was my playground. I would go across the tracks and play there.

K What was grade school like? Do you remember much about grade school and where you went?

H Yes. I first went to Catholic school. I hate to say this, but I was a very, very good student. I could repeat lessons right now that were in the reader. At the Catholic school, you learn, but you never forget. I always had very good grades. Then, my family moved back to Niles in one of their homes that they had here, and then, I went to the Jackson School. We would compete for first and second places, and I was still a very good student. There were lots of others that were good, too.

K: How many people were in a class?

H I would say that the teachers had at least thirty-five students.

K Were they a mixture of grades, or were they just one? They were just one grade?

H No, it was not a mixture of grades. When my people moved back to Niles and I went to the Jackson School, I believe I was in about the fifth grade. From then on, I went into Central High School.

K What was it like as a little child in Niles? What did you do for fun?

H I had very strict and very tender parents. I was raised very tenderly. I was not allowed to do a lot of things that people do. I had a hard time in high school even getting a book report. My dad did not believe in reading these books because it made people lazy. It

made you lazy

K. To read a book?

H Yes, to be reading those books We were allowed to study We studied hard, but we always did our lessons right away.

K. Were you the oldest in the family?

H No, I had a sister, Louise, that was raised with my aunt, Mame, here in Niles They are the ones who worked in Coral's Store across the road from William McKinley's home. My aunt, Mame, was the bookkeeper and so was my sister, Louise My husband's brother was the one, of course I did not know who did the delivering then. This store was across the road from Billy McKinley's home. All in all, I had a very happy, young life The Gueneri's, the Rozasco's, and the Carmella's all had stores in Niles

K What kind of stores?

H The Rozasco's had an ice cream parlor. The Gueneri's owned the store that sold ice cream and stuff These people were related but not Carmella's There are only two Carmella's left now That is Nina, and they are still in business in Niles now Sonny has a place where you sell beer and stuff

K Like a beverage type store?

H Yes, and they are still there on Main Street

K What did downtown Niles look like when you were in the fifth grade?

H Downtown Niles was a very progressive looking place A nice looking place Nice people owned the stores, the meat markets, and things, and it was very progressive The Calvin block is still on the corner, and Calvin had a very prominent drugstore I cannot tell you what is in there now because I do not know. The one that was in there built a new building and moved across the road The Niles Bank was there, and the Dollar Bank was there when I left. See, I have not been back for a long time Quite a while.

K What was high school like?

H I was on the debate team, I sang with one of the girls, and we had chapel in the morning My days in high school were very nice and very profitable

K. Can you tell me a little bit about the fashion that you wore to high school?

H My mom was a dressmaker, so she always kept us in very nice clothes. My mother was a beautiful sewer, so she always kept us in really pretty clothes. We just dressed ordinarily. I was pretty fortunate because I was able to have beautiful stockings and these sandals. I was always dressed really nicely.

K Where did your mother get the material from?

H There were wonderful dry goods stores in Niles, at that time, and she would purchase it there. Our shoes were bought from a store by the name of Bowden, Jim Bowden. Even when we lived in Youngstown, mom used to come up on the streetcar and buy our shoes at Bowden's store.

They lived next door to my grandmother, Shannon. They owned a lot of property there, too. We had nice stores. Before Hoffman's store was even in, before the three Hoffman brothers were in the store, they boarded with my aunt, Margaret. I used to sit on their laps. There were Frank and Homer. What was the other one's name? Anyway, there were three of them. She had a boarding house next to my grandmother, Shannon.

K What street was this at?

H Main Street. Some of the streets in Niles did change their names. As I remember, there was a Thomas who had a harness shop on Main Street, and that street used to be called Mill Street. Later, they changed it to State Street. It is changed now to State Street.

There was Freck's meat market, a wonderful meat market, and he used to make the most wonderful bologna. They boys never could make it, he had to. Later on, there were nice barber shops. These people were in the same age category like my husband. My husband was a little bit older than I am.

K So, high school seemed to be pretty much fun.

H. Oh, yes.

K What did you do after you graduated?

H. I did not graduate. I only went the two years. If I am not mistaken, not long after that, I got married.

K How did you meet your husband?

H There were about twenty young men; one was my husband, one was a man by the name of Paul Gibson who was the drummer, my brother, and boys by the name of Maheny. At St. Steven's Auditorium they held a dance. My sister, Josephine, and I were only allowed to go with anybody my brother sanctioned. If he said we could go with him, we could go.

On Friday nights, they would have this dance. I would say there were twenty of

them We had a glorious time. On the corner of Main Street, there used to be a little wagon that sold western sandwiches, hot dogs, and buttered popcorn My husband always bought me one of these great, big bags of popcorn We had to be home right after the dance and as soon as we could get that popcorn We had to be in the house

K. What time did the dances start? Do you remember?

H I cannot remember exactly but not like they do now It was much earlier when they would start We would have fun, and we would dance every kind of dance that there was

K What kind of dances were there?

H The Shaudish, Rye Waltz, Waltz, the Tango, everything that later on came into vogue We would dance and have fun We would get our sandwich or our bag of popcorn and, then, we would head for home Everybody walked because nobody had automobiles Fortunately, I only lived three blocks from that street there.

My sister and her boyfriend would be in the gang when we would be going home The four of us would go home at the same time I had a very happy childhood and a very happy home. I learned how to do every kind of work that there is We had these big stoves, and my dad would sit in his chair and take the paper We were not allowed to make any noise while ridding the table and doing the dishes We were workers

Mom would have the washing in piles down cellar, and we would do the washing and ironing I minded kids. If anybody did not want to do their ironing, I got to do it Mom would say, "Bring it over, and Molly will do it," We only had those sadirons

K That you heat up, yes How big was your house?

H Our house had two living rooms, a big kitchen, and a pantry We had a three filtered cistern in the pantry It was big like the kitchen and had lots of cupboard room, and we had a table and stuff in there. We ate breakfast in there instead of being in the dining room. As I say, we worked, which is good

K Did you have a big wedding or a small wedding?

H No, I did not have a big wedding. I was married at the Presbyterian. That place where the minister is right there on Mahoning Avenue.

K At the end of the street?

H Yes That is where my husband and I were married I did not have any big wedding In those days, it was not too fashionable for many big weddings I really did not have a big wedding.

K Did World War I affect Niles at all?

H Oh, yes

K Did it? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

H My husband was not in World War I. It took the cream of the crop, the young boys. There were many, many wonderful young men that never returned. Their names were placed on a board after

K Did it affect the emotional state of the town more than the economical?

H I think it did because when your sons go off to war, mothers' hearts are broken and so are fathers'. It is a sad, sad thing.

K So, it affected everybody.

H I am sure it did, yes. Of course, at that time, we had wonderful steel mills and various things. Niles was a progressive little town. You could not say that it was not. It was very nice.

K And it kept up with the progress of years, always?

H Just like all the rest. Things start deteriorating, and it is sad the way the country is today.

K Why not tell me a little bit about your married life?

H I had a very happy married life.

K Did you move into a house right away?

H No, we went to live with his mother because his father was an invalid. That was on Park Avenue. My husband was quite young, and we went in there to live.

There was another family that did light housekeeping there. A family that had formerly lived in the neighborhood where I was and where my parents were when they moved back to Niles. They were older than my husband was. After I had my first child, they just took complete charge of him. They took him all over, and they had him all day, fortunately.

K, Do you remember what time it was?

H No, I do not remember what time it was, but I am going to tell you that I was always ready to give him away.

K I bet that was fun.

H Yes, it was

K. You had your first child in what year?

H In 1916 They took him everywhere In fact, they wanted to adopt him

K. But you were not willing to give him up

H: No They were wonderful people. I shed a lot of tears over both of them when they died. They were really wonderful people

K: What did your husband do for a living?

H At that time, my husband worked in the pottery The pottery was very progressive in Niles. It was called the Tritchana Company It was a very progressive place, and while there, he learned about three different trades

K: Do you remember what they were?

H. Well, I do not know about that I only that the cups are made, and then, they put the handles on them

K It is exactly what the title means, a cup handler

H A cup handler, yes. The cup is made, but it has not been kiln fired yet They put the handle on, and then, it goes on I cannot tell you about the hollow ware I just know that I had lots of it

K What did the Depression do to you as a family?

H Well, we owned a store

K What kind of store?

H Everything. groceries, meat, produce. Tamarkin's were the people that brought our produce and Tobb's, people in Youngstown Hean Thifian was the wholesaler that brought your staples. The Macali boys worked for a fellow by the name of Russ Trefridge, who owned a delivery system. They did the delivering They came to your store about four times a day and picked up the orders

Well, the Depression was hard on everybody It came to the time that they just had a city order and a piece of paper. Most of our customers were very, very good

They stayed within the limits I think there were only two or them that ever went bankrupt, but they still paid their bill. They were not bad customers They still paid their bill

K What was the name of your store?

H Hubbard & Sons Food Market, and it was on West Park Avenue. The Macali boys and my sons went to school together They had not graduated yet Whenever they had graduated, my boys enlisted in the service because they had no other recourse. The second one was asked to go first, and the oldest one wanted to take his place They would not let him. My husband got the school people to keep the oldest one back a year because he wanted him to play football, which he never did. The second one played football The authorities let him stay back, so consequently, the both of them graduated the same year, which was nice

K So, they were enlisted in what branch of the service?

H. The oldest one was in the engineers, they guys that go first Bob was with Mark Clark's Army, the one that went to Africa, Italy, and those places. One was in the 90th Division, and one was in the 91st Division

K. What year did they enlist? So you remember?

H I did have the pictures and everything of Bob getting on the bus There was a schoolteacher by the name of Reba Howes She was like at the head of the thing She saw that Bob was sort of in charge of all the boys on the bus. Before Bob graduated, he had the concessions at the swimming pool at Waddel Park and at the ball park It was through Reba because she knew that he was a good, conscientious boy. He was really bent on going to college You know Pat Sullivan that passed away here? He was the county treasurer

K: Yes.

H: Well, he and Bob used to study together in our living room while the Depression was on

K Because there was not much else to do?

H No, there was not Having the store we had so many doors We had the warehouse door, the cellar door, the back door, and the front door We had so many doors that everyone was in our front room They would come in the store, pick up those magazines, bring them in, and read them If you went to the bathroom, there would be someone up there shaving We only had one bathroom

K What was World War II like for Niles?

H: Well, World War II, now wait a minute.

K We have gone from the Depression kind of forward here

H World War II was just as devastating as the First World War My boys were still in the service and they did not come out. They had it rough in different places they were at
Three of them now are gone They are sleeping under an American flag now
One died in Italy. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery One died on Whidbey Island He came home from Vietnam with cancer because that is what he died from. He had both gold and silver wings He had the kind that you got when you went down on the ships and in the submarines and things He had gold and then silver wings because he flew the helicopter that picked up the dead in Vietnam

When he came back, he first had a heart attack Then, he noticed some blood in his urine, and he had a kidney operation Then, it went to the right lung and to the left lung So, he passed away on Whidbey Island, and that is where he is buried.

His wife died of cancer, too She has not been dead very long, and she is buried beside him Joe was with the ones who dropped the atomic bomb Now, he was not a pilot or anything like that, but he was in every place that they were

Then, the war was finally over. He was the only one who did not stay that many years when he came home. He was born with heart trouble, anyway Joe only weighed two pounds and four ounces when he was born So, he had heart trouble, but he wanted to go to the service We signed papers for him to go [*Tape stops, then continues with*]

I may not be as old as some of the people who were born in Niles and knew McKinley, but I still have good hearing and eyesight

K You still got it That is great. That is a real good way to think. I think when we ended we were at 1940 So, it was right before the war, and you told me a little bit about your sons. Do you want to kind of recap a little bit, and then, we can go on?

H Well, I had four sons and two of them were older than the last two There was a period of five years that I did not have children I had the first two, Jacque and Robert, and then, for a period of about five years, I did not have any.

Then, when Joe was born, he weighed two pounds and four ounces He was what you call a blue baby. They did not think he would live, and they just put him under the covers I was to go to the hospital, but I could not make it.

We had a nurse that was to take care of the two older children, and she was on a case in Youngstown She came. She was from a prominent family in Niles She and her husband had had a store there in Niles, at that time. He died, and then, she went back to, I suppose, her profession

Now, my husband went to school with her, and he knew her real well She did come and stay with the older children, and she took care of the other baby

- K We were at 1940 Can you tell me a little bit about what was going on in Niles?
- H At that time, as I remember, Niles was a very prosperous place It had a lot of nice stores
- K What kind of stores? Every kind?
- H Oh, every kind. Dry goods stores and everything you could think of They had shoe stores, dry goods stores, confectionaries, meat markets, and everything you could think of in the line of a nice place It was a very prosperous place Well, they had grocery stores and things like that They had everything that you could imagine for a very prosperous, nice city
- When the war came along, everyone was brokenhearted because their sons would have to go
- K Was it the general patriotic duty to go to war, or was there not anything else to do?
- H The way I see it is that we owned that store, at that time My sister worked there, and then, I had a housekeeper that looked after setting the table. I did all the washing and ironing and stuff like that, but she looked after setting the table, doing the dishes, and things like that
- Of course, everybody was very sad, and you know how people are. They try every way to keep their children out of the service Some people do not see the value of it My boys always told me, "Do not worry " Like every other mother, I had boxes full of things
- K What kind of stuff did you put in the boxes?
- H Well, everything you could think of There was a drugstore in Niles, which the block is still here called Calvin's Drugstore Calvin made a salve that you put on for impetigo Lots of children in Niles had that, but I never put anything on anybody until their parents sanctioned it This salve would cure impetigo, but the parents had to sanction
- People did not have any money during the Depression. People did not have money enough to cook a meal I put some of that in, and I would put socks and different things that they needed In fact, Pritchard's store was very good They saved me a dozen pairs of those wool socks. Joe told me afterwards that those were so wonderful.
- K What happened after everyone came home from the war?
- H It was a sorrowful Niles because many of the cream of the crop of the young men had passed away
- K Just like with World War I, right?

H Yes. It was a very sorrowful place because nothing breaks a person's heart more than losing your children. They say you can lose a husband easier than you can your children, which, perhaps, is understandable. No matter how good of a husband you have, children are such a part of you.

Of course, when mine passed away, I was very brokenhearted. I am going to tell you that you do not die of a broken heart. Mine passed away so many thousands of miles away from me and had been gone for so many years that you know what I mean. Of course, I still have the one living in Arizona. I do not know what else to tell to you. Just that every mother and father was brokenhearted.

K What was the job situation like?

H. At the time, we had mills. We had the Republic Mill, which was on Main Street. We had the one in Russia Field that they called Russia Field because there were so many Italians there. My husband's brother worked there.

K So, there were jobs for the people when they came back?

H As I remember, when you went to the service, you were to have your job back when you came back.

K That is basically what happened?

H I presume that is basically what happened. When my boys came back, I am not so sure because we were in the store then. We had moved. People were getting city orders, those pieces of paper that they gave people so much, that they were allowed so much. I would say that we had very, very nice customers. Only two of them went bankrupt, but they finally paid their bill.

K So, everybody paid.

H Yes, most of them stayed within the limits.

K When did Niles start changing? When did the mills start leaving?

H Well, I would say the mills started leaving only through this administration.

K So, it has been a pretty prosperous town up until now?

H Yes, definitely.

K What were the 1950's like? Did just about everybody have a car then?

- H. Yes, most everybody had a car. Now, you are speaking of the 1960's?
- K The 1950's were right after World War II, that ten year span
- H Well, I would not say that too many people had a car, at that time, because they were so overwhelmed with debt. Some people had cars. People who had money had cars but not everybody
- K When was Hoffman's put in?
- H. I was a very small girl, as I told you, and the three Hoffman's boarded with my aunt, Margaret. There was Henry, Frank, and Homer, and, at that time, they were not married. Frank was the youngest, Henry was the oldest, and Homer was the next. My grandmother lived right next door, and Aunt Margaret lived right here. I was just back and forth when I would come up. I cannot remember when they first started the store, but they had a very, very flourishing business. All of the clerks and everybody in there were nice. They were very fine men.
- K What year did the store burn?
- H That evades me because I just cannot remember what year it burned
- K That is okay
- H But I do remember about it.
- K Did it have a big effect on the town?
- H Yes, it did. I believe one life was lost. Everybody really was very heartbroken because it was a very nice store with nice men to deal with, nice clerks, and everything.
- K It was kind of the end of an era, maybe?
- H Yes. We had a few other stores in the town. Shaker's was on the corner down there. They had a store. At first, Mr. Shaker used to have a Five and Dime store on what was Mill Street then, but they have changed it to State Street now. The reason it was called Mill Street is because where his store was down this way.
- K. The gristmill was down at the end
- H. Well, it was not the end, but it was on that. That was the reason they called it Mill Street then. A man by the name of McConnell ran the gristmill. In later years, they changed it to State Street. I do not know why. I just know that it was changed to State Street. Just

the same as when I was a girl. McKannock was changed to Arlington.

K Have the styles changed from this period a lot?

H: Yes, they did. Of course, women did not wear pants then. Women wore sensible dresses, not too short, just down this far.

K Just below the knee.

H Yes, but not too short. They did not wear pants until after the war came along.

K World War I or II?

H: World War II. After World War I, I am sure that they did not wear pants. After World War II, when you worked at these munitions plants like Ravenna, you wore pants there. I never worked there, but I did work at the Lordstown Depot.

K What did you do at the Depot?

H I have done various things. I first started out as a stock picker.

K What was that?

H An IBM would come from receiving, and somebody would bring that IBM over. You would get that stock ready, and it would go on a little truck. Then, it would be taken to shipping. I was clerk typist, and as I say, I worked there twice. Also, I worked at Penny's twice. I worked at both places at two different times.

K When did you work at Penny's?

H I worked at Penny's, and that is the last place I worked. When the boys came back from the Second World War, I told them that anybody that wanted my job was welcome to it because they deserved to have the job more than me. Then, I left there. I took my retirement fund.

After we got out of the store, my husband got back to his trades in the pottery. He worked in Cambridge, Ohio, and he worked in Steubenville. My husband roomed there for a long, long time. I used to go down and visit with him, and the same in Cambridge.

The reason he was in Cambridge was because Niles had a pottery, and it burned. The Tritt's owned it. Well, my husband, I guess, was always a good, conscientious worker, so they invited him to come to Cambridge where they had a pottery. That is how he happened to be there. I used to go down and stay down there for a day or two at a time.

K: What were the 1960's like in Niles?

H Joe, the one that was with the B-29's, did not stay in the service as long as the other boys. The other boys stayed many years. The doctor that we were doctoring with on account of him having rheumatic fever advised us to take him to the warm climate. We went to California.

K. So, how long were you in California, then?

H Well, I worked in the York Market and lived on 5053 Lincoln Avenue in Los Angeles. My husband worked in the San Anita Pottery in San Antina.

K So, when did you move back to Niles?

H The reason we moved back to Niles is that Joe wanted to go to the service. That is the one that had the rheumatic fever. My husband did not want him to go with strangers out there. He wanted him to come back home and go.

K With people from Niles?

H Yes, people from Niles. We all served our two weeks notice, and then, we came back to Niles. We came back to Niles, and then, Joe went into the service. Of course, we had to sign papers for him.

End of Interview