

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Education

Personal Experience

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WILLIAM LOCKE

Interviewed

by

John Gulgas

on

April 30, 1985

G This is an interview with William Locke for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on school days at Jackson Milton High School in the 1950's, by John Gulgas, on April 30, 1985, at 3 00pm

Now, what I would like to know, if you had to pick a favorite subject you took in school, what would it be.

L Probably Chemistry and Physics.

G What made that your favorite subject?

L Well, I liked science and math. I had a major in both I also liked the teacher, which was Mr Belusso

G Oh right, Mr Belusso I have gone through the yearbooks and I saw the name What made his class interesting? What was it that he did?

L Well, the thing that was interesting was that in lab, he brought up everything that normally you did not get an occasion to use. Also in physics, we got to do a lot of lab experiments and a lot of things that just interested me

G What about like the outside of the classroom, extracurricular activities? What was it about that that maybe you were interested in? Like football, were you in any of those?

L Oh, yes I played all sports Four years of all of them Basketball was my favorite I played until I was thirty-nine

G Very good What about social functions like dances and so forth, were there any of those that you remember?

L Oh yes We had social functions. The big thing was class plays that they had junior and senior years They sponsored a class play to make money because we all went to Washington So, this was the big thing we used

G Back to the social functions You were talking about the D C trip?

L We were talking about plays What we did, we had plays When you were a junior, you sold ice cream bars and stuff in the cafeteria When you were a senior you had to sell candy and potato chips You see, they had enough to spend and that is where we made out money to take a trip Then we also had the plays and dances The Spring Dance, the May Dance, and the prom and so on We did not have an extremely lot of functions.

- G Any of those your favorite?
- L No, I do not really say any favorite. I guess the Spring Dance and the May Dance were probably the biggest. Then the next biggest event was probably homecoming for the football or something like that.
- G Some of those things do not change, I guess. Any of the fads in clothing or hair that you remember that you liked or that you did not like?
- L Well, the fads in hair. We never had long hair. In fact, with my children, that was the big thing, getting used to them wearing it ear length even. The hairdo that was mostly the fad then was the butch. If you played ball at all, you had no hair. They cut it right off. That was the thing. The girls wore medium length hair. I would say shoulder length. There were not too many that had long hair. The duck tail or that stuff, the girls did not wear that short hair then either. It was kind of a medium at the time. The bobby socks and the skirts. Girls did not wear the jeans to school then.
- G They were not allowed?
- L They wore skirts and blouses. The jean fad was not in. Now, the boys were allowed to, because we were classified as a country school. We were allowed to wear jeans and plaid shirts as long as they were presentable. Most times, if the fellows wore jeans and not dress pants, they wore short sleeved dress shirts with them, very few wore plaid. Some of the families could not afford it. A couple of kids wore bib overalls, but they were always cleaned and patched, so there was no problem.
- G: Not like it is today.
- L No, it was kind of easygoing.
- G Let us talk about lunchtime. Do you remember lunchtime? Any fond memories of that?
- L I was one that mainly ate in the cafeteria. I did not carry a lunch too often. So, you just waited in line and took your turn, whatever class went through first, and you had your lunch. The rest of the time was outside in the playground. Most times we spent just playing "tag" or basketball or something, or sitting on the steps just enjoying yourself.
- G What was the food like?
- L The food was very good. The cafeteria was not huge, but the cooks I think were very

good

G For the size

L Yes The food was, I do not know how to say it, it was not like what you got at home It was not seasoned the same or anything, but it was good There was not anything there that was not edible

G How about after school or the weekend hangouts? Did you have any favorites that you can think back on?

L When you played sports, you did not have many after school hangouts You spent most of your time in the gym or the football field, or the baseball field, or out on the track, or whatever you were running The big thing was the skating rink we had out here Roller skating, that was the big thing That is over there It is a church now, where the Trinity Church is That was the skating rink That was the skating rink for years, the only one around here That was about the only thing until it came into existence Well, we were about out of school before the drive-in thing started Most of the times, the big thing was having skating parties or class skating parties or something to raise a little money It was called Milton Gardens at the time It used to draw quite a crowd They had an organist and organ music was played, a Hammond organ There were no records or anything else

G Not piped in or any of that, no?

L They played requests and everything. It was really nice.

G Sounds like it would be

L Enjoyable Between there and Point B Dance Hall and Geberk, those were the only two in the area You could go either to the dance hall or the skating rink

G The dance hall is still there is it not?

L Oh, yes. That one at Point B is still there That is on 62

G I know where that is at

L We used to go there all the time At that time, the big hit was Jimmy Gunner You have probably never even heard of him

G No, I have not Tell me about Jimmy Gunner

L Jimmy Gunner, he was something else, one of those cowboy specialists He used

to draw the crowds I mean, his music really, honestly was not that great. I do not know why, but he attracted the younger ones Then, the weekends was the time you took your date dancing. That was when you had the Melody Makers They were from Alliance and they were a real super band They played real good music, not that rang or twangy stuff So, it was the same dance hall but completely different atmosphere

G It changed at different times Was Jimmy Country and Western?

L Oh, yes, Country and Western Just like they have at that Ponderosa Park That was the big thing then with him Times do not change that much, they keep revolving back

G I guess they do I am learning more about it all the time The more I talk about it, the more I am finding out Well, let us see here What would you say if you had to do it over, was there anything that could have been done to make the high school even better? Or, were you satisfied with the way it was?

L I think the high school was good the way it was For the amount of students we had, there really was not much that we could do. I thought we had a superintendent, Mr Kepner, at that time He was very fair. He did not have any problems He did not stand for any nonsense At that time, like I try to impress on my children, the atmosphere was that everybody respected the elder people then The male teachers, the female teachers, the superintendent There was not any of this smart stuff, "well you hit me, I will tell my dad," and so on The big thing then was, if you did something and you told your dad, you get it again So, you better keep your mouth shut

G I guess

L That is the way it worked. I always felt even though you got disciplined for stuff, I always felt he was awful fair

G The way he handled that?

L He handled everyone super There is always someone that does not like you, but as a general thing he was well-liked, very well-liked His son was in the same room with me He is in Indiana now, he is a pediatrician A very good one too, and he was as big of a devil as anybody It did not make any difference He got into as much trouble as we did

G He probably got the same punishment too

L Oh, yes He sure did

- G That would be rough having your father as a superintendent
- L Yes, it was a little hard for him.
- G I bet Well, we will move on here. Did you take part in the senior trip? Did you go to D C ?
- L Oh, yes
- G What can you tell me about that? What do you remember about that?
- L Well, the big thing was that we all went on the greyhound bus and we stayed in kind of a motor court They had like all cabins all tied together and it was right on the Potomac there where we stayed Of course, all the boys were in one section and the girls in the other It was just the idea that it was just like a big barracks, like the service All the boys, the whole bunch, you would just go from door to door They were all one section. Of course, we had sponsors, the teachers took care of both We saw a lot of Washington Actually, we saw everything at Washington The tours were super We were there a week Then we had a little money left over, so we took a plane ride over Washington We knew we were going to have some left There were a few that did not go because they did not get permission slips from the parents That was the big thing if something would happen then You had to have a permission slip when you left to go down there That was really nice I really enjoyed that They took a plane ride all over Washington We were up for forty-five minutes, which is long enough
- G Yes, you see most of it by then How about senior farewell activities? What were they like? I know you a prom and so forth, but did you have like a senior skip day or something that all the seniors did?
- L There was not a senior skip day then Fortunately that year, we won the county championship that was the first time they ever did in basketball, and they gave the whole school a day off That was like a skip day The big thing that they did, all the seniors took the place of the teachers
- G Tell me about that
- L We were all assigned a class from the first grade to the twelfth grade Now, the teacher was there but you directed the class That was the student activity for the seniors All the seniors, no matter whether it was shop, chemistry, science, English or whatever it was Every senior got to participate.
- G Which one did you have?

- L I had the science room, Stanley Kepner had the chemistry lab, and I forgot who had physics I think Wilford Carnes had that Like some of the shop classes were doubled up with two in a shop
- G A little different on the other end of the stick?
- L Oh yes It gives you a little something to look at. A little different aspect It was fun So, that was the big thing, they ran the office and everything
- G Tell me what it was like to play basketball. What did that involve? What did that demand of you?
- L Well, it demanded a lot of your time We practiced every night At that time, we ran the halls and the steps from one end to the other We played in the small gym, which now, I do not even think it is used anymore
- G Did they make the cafeteria out of that?
- L Yes, I think they did make it the cafeteria That was the gym then The one end had the stage where they had the plays You either ended up on the stage if somebody got you, or out through the doors right out on the sidewalk It was quite the thing then Our coach was E E Francis, who I thought was a super basketball coach He demanded that everybody were good foul shooters Everybody had to shoot fifty or make fifty before you went home If you stayed all night, why that was your problem After you made five you had to get off the line and then set up again. He did not want you just standing there popping one after the other So, after the practice and the plays and the running of the halls and steps, then you had to make fifty fouls Then you could take your shower and go home But, I mean, he was not extremely hard on everybody He was kind of quiet and easygoing, but everybody knew he meant what he said He had a big sign up in the locker room that said, "It is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog " He proved that a number of times by throwing kids off the team that were very good players, but did not conform or did not keep the rules
- G That is what they say can make a winning team
- L To our dismay, we lost a couple of good players, we thought at the time But, we found out after that we could do without them
- G That is true, if you cannot follow the rules
- L That is why I say it was different. The respect was there I see it today and sometimes I wonder how the teachers can put up with it

- G What were some of the things kids got in trouble for or disciplined for?
- L Well, mostly the biggest thing was fighting or skipping the school busses, not going to school on the school busses, or getting a ride home That was the big thing then. Luckily, we did not have any drugs to contend with. Alcohol was very limited, we had a few problems with alcohol. If we did, why you did not hear many of them because they were stopped right away My five children have graduated from that school and I know every one of them was exposed to it and, thank God, we got by without any problems It is there No matter what I say or what I tell them, it is there Thank God they were strong enough to get through it
- G Practical jokes, either that you did or were done to you or that you saw Do any of them stand out in you mind? That is one of my favorite areas
- L Well, there were a lot of things that happened I am trying to remember. We took one teacher's pants off one time and put them on top of the flagpole He had to run around in his shorts to get somebody to take them down Of course, we all got detention for that That was the principal's son, too, or the superintendent's son with us on that one Mainly that was the biggest thing, or hiding things from people in somebody else's locker or stuff like that We never did anything really, practically to hurt anybody They did not seem to have that sense of wanting to hurt anybody, just have a good time really It was just mainly hiding and taking stuff from people, and maybe a couple days and give it back to them It was not anything to really hurt anybody Or if it came down to something they really had to have, we made sure we gave it back
- G It was not malicious or anything like that?
- L No, we were pretty fortunate Of course, we did not have that big of a class either, sixty kids
- G: Everybody knew everybody else?
- L Yes, so it was not that much involved
- G We will wrap it up here by asking you, during that time period you had a lot of things that were going on, the Truman-Dewey election in 1948 where Truman upset Dewey, the Korean War, the U.S Steel Strike Any of those strike a bell with you?
- L Well, I remember the elections and the Dewey campaign and the Dewey buttons and all that stuff Of course, the big steel strike. That was the first one that we ever really had in this area did any kind of damage at all Really it did not last



that long that time. The bigger strike was the next one after that, that really hurt everybody.

G That was in the 1960's I think. There was a lot of activities going on there. A lot of things. Things were a different pace then. It was after World War II. During that time, we had to close our shop here and my dad, of course he had it, because you could not buy anything. Everything was rationed. Everything was stamped. If you needed a pair of shoes, we had to go to Canfield and get a ration stamp for them. If you needed a pound of butter, or if you needed a C ration card or an A ration card or whatever, you had to go there to get it. Now, my dad was fortunate because he worked for the Federal Tank and Welding and he worked for the government. He taught engineering. They made the Sherman Tank Hauls over there. So, he was in the engineering department. So, he was lucky to have an A stamp so he could get enough gas and get back and forth. Everybody had one car, not two.

The big thing on Saturday was going to Newton Falls to get your groceries. There was not any grocery stores around here. I used to walk from here to Craig Beach to have somebody to play with in the winter time. Everybody in the summer moved away.

G That is because it is a resort area really.

L Now, it is ninety-eight percent here year round. But at that time, it was about thirty-five percent. The closest big grocery store, chain store, was in Newton Falls. That was the A & P. That was Saturday. Dad did not work on Saturday morning. Everybody got in the car and got to go to the A & P and smell the coffee being ground and all that.

G That was the big thing?

L Oh sure. Then Mom canned just about everything. We had a garden and we used to go all over and we would pick the fruits and she would can. They just bought the staples and fifty pounds bags of flour to make your own bread and stuff. People do not think of that today.

G No, they do not.

L That was the thing that we would get. So, you would get one trip a week over there and that was about the extent of the rides. We would hook rides on the milk truck and the bread truck with our sleds in the winter, because there was not much traffic. We could go for a mile and a half. He might have ten kids hanging on each other's feet with their sleds going down the main road. We entertained ourselves. There was no TV. Sunday nights you got to hear Burns and Allen or Jack Benny on the radio, that was the big thing, you know. I really think it was easier for your school work. I think that was the big thing, you know. I really

think it was easier for your school work. I think that was the big thing that kids were more attentive with school work because you can listen to a radio and work. You cannot watch that T V. and work.

G That is true. I do not know how they can do it.

L I do not know either. If that thing is on, like I tell the kids, when that thing is on, you might as well close your books. So, fortunately, they all went to college. I got five through school, three through college, and two more in college.

G Gosh, you are working hard.

L I hope I can make it.

G So, how did you end up with this business? Did you take it away from your dad?

L I worked with my dad for some time. When I was in school, I worked for Woodward in Warren. In summers I got a job with them. I worked for Martin Nelson in Girard. I liked the business. My brother at the time, I had an older brother and sister, of course Mary you now. Then my brother, Don, he was at Ohio State at the time. I had two scholarships in sports to go to school, but money was not there. See, they did not have state grants, federal grants, we did not have any. We were not lucky enough. Possibly my kids would not have been able to go either, all of them, if they did not have that. They had good grades and fortunately, they helped and they worked.

G That makes a difference.

L With the whole thing together we made it. At that time, it was either go to work or that was it. So I stayed and I helped my dad because my brother was taking everything we had to keep him at Ohio State. I, in turn, stayed and helped the family and I liked the business. So in turn, I stayed with him. Then we worked for the country, both of us, taking care of those filter and water plants and stuff for about twenty years.

I quit that in 1970 because you cannot run two businesses. It just got to be too much. Because that got big. When we started down there, there were one hundred and forty accounts and when I gave it up there was six hundred and eighty. You had all the hydrants to take care of and then the fabulous county gave us two dollars and twelve cents an hour. We could hire anybody we wanted for that. Who would work for that? This is all part of it, you know, as times change. When he got enough time to retire, he worked for the state. He drove a school bus. He was a school bus driver in the last few years I was in school. Then he worked for the county and he had enough time for retirement. I took the job over. It was just too much. I was on twenty-four hour call.

You would leave home Monday morning and come home on Wednesday night. Why, that is no good. You know, you about spent all night on the water, break some sleep on the piles of salt bags for a couple hours, and go. That is no home life.

G I agree

L So, that is the way it turned out

G Well, I thank you

End of Interview