

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU History

O.H. 2190

Jack Lorenzini

Interviewed

by

Lesley Durkin

on

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INTERVIEWEE: Jack Lorenzini

INTERVIEWER: Lesley Durkin

SUBJECT: YSU History

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P: This is an interview with Jack Lorenzini for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on YSU History, by Lesley Durkin, at Mr. Lorenzini's house, on April 29, 2004. 4:30 p.m. This project was funded by the Ford Foundation.

D: Hi, What's your name?

L: My name is Jack Lorenzini.

D: And where were you born?

L: I was born in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, on September 27, 1979.

D: How many siblings do you have?

L: I have two older sisters. One is 27, her name is Amy; and I have an older sister, Debbie, she's 31. I also have a half-sister who's 11, she's younger than me obviously, and she lives in Kansas and she's a spoiled brat.

D: What are your parents' names?

L: My dad's name is Denny Lorenzini, and my mom's name is Barbara.

D: And what do your parents do for a living?

L: My mother is a nurse manager on the eighth floor of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and my dad is a car salesman. He works for Jeep-Chrysler.

D: What can you tell me about your parents' education?

L: Well, my mother recently graduated with her Bachelor's Degree from Youngstown State last year, (last May) and my dad went to school I believe at YSU.

D: Did he graduate?

L: Yes, I think he has a Bachelor's in Business.

D: Can you tell me about where you lived as a child?

L: Well, I was born in Kansas. We lived there for less than a year, so I don't remember much about that. But I lived in Youngstown for at least 21 to 23 years of my life. My first home we lived near Youngstown Christian School, and it was just basically houses. We had a train track in front, and I remember seeing the trains pass by at 6 p.m. We lived at that address for five years, then we moved to a more residential area off of West Boulevard. It was pretty much occupied by a bunch of old people; we were the only young families there at the time, and I can remember trick-or-treating there and not having many trick-or-treats. Essentially I got an apple and like a nickel from all the old people. And then which brings me to where I am now, we've been here for about six years. It's a condo area; it's a nice place.

D: What can you tell me about your ethnic background?

L: I am Italian and Slovak. I'm about 25% Italian and the rest Slovak, and Polish, and part British.

D: Where did you go to school before YSU?

L: I attended West Boulevard Elementary School, kindergarten through fourth grade; and from fifth to eighth, I went to Boardman Center Middle School, and I went to Boardman High School up until YSU.

D: Did you have any favorite subjects when you were in school?

L: My favorite subjects have always been Social Studies, English to an extent, Science early on because it was more hands-on, but once I hit high school, forget about it.

D: Were there any teachers that you felt were influential?

L: I had a few I guess...when do you want?

D: Whenever you want to talk about.

L: My first influential teacher was in elementary school, her name was Ms. H. She taught language arts, she was a cool teacher. I can remember belly dancing in front of her class, and she would let me belly dance in front of the class, and you know have they have like the little circular windows on the doors in the elementary school? Before she would always cover up the circle so that I could belly dance in front of my class. She thought it was funny, I thought it was funny.

D: Why did you belly dance?

L: Looking back, I don't even know why I belly danced. It was just like, okay, this is a larger than life second grader, (because I was tall for a second grader and I was pretty big). I am still big today, but it just happens that way. But when I got to middle school I would say I had two influential teachers: Ms. Malys, who was a Social Studies teacher. She said, "The most important thing is Social Studies." She's the mother of your dentist, Dr. Malys, and they have a great family. In eighth grade my influential teacher was Mrs. Beck. She was like probably 70 years old, taught history, and she says, "You gotta have pizzazz!" And I just liked her because she was really influential in my life, and got me to like history more and more. And when I was in high school I would say I had a lot of influential teachers. Mrs. Goske, Mrs. Amero, who taught Italian, Mrs. Goske taught English. Mr. Petretich was considered the 'Nazi' teacher of history. He was just evil to everybody, but I liked him because I think he really made me realize what I want to do as far as studying history. I think it's always those teachers who have these bad images with the rest of the students that really make students like me push hard, and excel, and achieve something.

D: What do you mean, "Students like you?"

L: What I mean is that I think they're given a bad image because students don't want to work hard to get where they're at. I think he really pushed me to become a better student and to develop an opinion and support it, because back then I would just spout off things and not back it up. I remember buying a shirt that said, "I'm not opinionated, I'm just always right." So those were my influential teachers.

D: Okay, what about your parents? What kind of influence would you say your parents had on your education?

L: My dad, not much because my parents divorced at an early age. I can't even remember him having an influence; he's just been proud of my accomplishments. But my mom has had an impact on my life. She's always pushed me to do my best and it was always our family motto, to "Do your best no matter what."

D: Did you participate in any extracurricular activities, or anything? Like what kind of extracurricular activities were you in to?

L: In high school I participated in the Italian Club, and for a few years I was in the Bible Club. I was also in National Honors Society and the Italian Honors Society. But those were really the only clubs, I wasn't really the athletic type. I remember trying out for football in seventh grade and got cut, and for anyone to get in seventh grade in football, it's kind of terrible. But that's the problem with Boardman, it's pretty much political, it's all about who you know, and that's that.

D: So did you graduate from high school with honors?

L: I graduated high school with a 3.5, if you want to call that honors. I guess it is honors. Yes, yes, honors.

D: When were you a student at Youngstown State?

L: I started YSU September of '98, and I've been a student ever since.

D: Why did you choose YSU?

L: Basically because it was close to home, convenient, and probably the only place that accepted me.

D: When you entered YSU what was your major?

L: Originally I was undeclared, as almost everybody is as a freshman. I became interested in Social Studies Education, but the advisors over there were just horrific. They were terrible. I mean they probably couldn't even sharpen a pencil at the right time, so it was then when I switched my major to History, where they seemed more organized and more willing to let me graduate within four years.

D: Any Advisor in particular that you can think of that...?

L: I can't really think of any names of the advisors. I can just remember waiting forever to get advised and they really don't run things smoothly, because the problem with the College of Education is every time that you had gone for an appointment, you'd get a different Advisor, and the other Advisors wouldn't know what the hell was going on.

D: Okay, so you chose History, anything in particular about History that drew you to it?

Do you have a particular period of interest or something?

L: When I got the major I didn't know what I was going to focus on, I just always loved history and it was always a subject that I was good at. Of course right now I am interested

in Twentieth Century American History, and I like parts of European History, as well as 19th Century America.

D: How did you pay for school?

L: I had loans, (the Federal Student loans), I think they're Stafford Loans. And my first semester I got a Departmental Award through the University, not the History department, just like a general award, and that was about \$1,500, and I just used my loans, I worked, but I didn't pay for school, it was just...

D: Play money?

L: Yea, going deeper and deeper in debt. And then in 2002 I got a Graduate Assistantship, which luckily paid all my tuition costs, the only thing I had to worry about was the general fee, which was like \$500 a semester.

D: Do you feel like tuition has risen significantly since you started?

L: Hell yea! I mean it's terrible that they keep raising tuition for the students that can't afford it, because I know of some people that just really can't go to school because it's gotten so high now. I mean compared to other states like maybe Florida, Mississippi, and California, they have a cheaper, you know, price that they pay, and I think it's really a shame. But at the same time they really can't help it, because the state is pretty bad right now.

D: How do you think the campus has changed since you started in '98 as opposed to now?

L: I really don't notice much change other than the new addition to the football stadium on the other side. I also notice – well, when I was there I remember the College of Education building being there, and that building is like elaborate. As far as it changing, I think there might have been a few places that have gone. Burger King no longer exists, probably because it was infested by eighties filth, and it just wasn't a good environment for students.

D: What kind of recreation is available for students? Or was available?

L: Well, the University still has intramurals, they can do intramurals ranging from arena football, to volleyball to, if they want to swim, that's what they can do recreationally.

D: Did you take advantage of these?

L: No, I know a few friends that participated in soccer in intramurals, but that was about it. I think the reason why I didn't participate in any of these is because I'm just like any other student at YSU during my undergraduate, because I'm apathetic. There are students on campus – the majority of them are apathetic; they just have different lives, they have

families to support and other things going on, and they just want to take their classes and leave at the end of the day. They don't want to stick around the campus.

D: Well, obviously you commuted then, did you find parking to be an issue?

L: Yes, parking is a horrific issue at YSU. I think I remember writing a letter to *The Jambar* one year saying, "Where are the damn parking spaces?" I can remember it being so bad that, I think it was my first year, I got a parking ticket because I parked right in front of a fire hydrant, and it was just horrific. But it just depends, I think the parking problem was horrific to me in my opinion because I believe that by paying tuition at YSU that I should get a damn good parking space just like everybody else. I mean sure there are spaces available, but if you have a class in DeBartolo, you don't want to park all the way over by the Wick Deck, so the deck right by DeBartolo is a matter of convenience. But once I got to Graduate School I didn't encounter a problem because everyone was gone by the time the classes started.

D: Where did you buy your books from?

L: I bought my books from Campus Book and Supply and the campus Bookstore.

D: What's your opinion on the prices?

L: They're extremely expensive. I think I also remember writing another letter to *The Jambar* in which I believe the books were just outrageous. I mean, you have four or five books, it could cost you \$200-\$300, which is expensive. I had one friend who was a Biology major where one book was about \$100. I think the good thing about the History major is that I think it's like one of the cheapest majors with the books because with the exception of the general surveys like World Civilization and American U.S 1, the upper division classes more or less require you to have just regular books on a specialized subject. Whether it be the Vietnam War or the Age of Jefferson/Jackson, (those books were like probably anywhere from \$15 to \$30) which is feasible because those were the prices that you would normally pay if you went to Barnes and Noble or Borders.

D: Can you describe to me what traditions have you noticed being observed at Youngstown State?

L: Traditions that I actually wanted to pay attention to? Or just...

D: Just stuff that was in your face, you noticed it regardless, even if you didn't want to.

L: I noticed the Homecoming tradition because I attended a lot of the football games at YSU. I think that a big tradition at YSU is attending a football game and getting drunk in the tailgate lot. Although now there's controversy with the tailgate situation, but I've noticed Homecoming and I can always remember on campus them having sign saying, "Vote for me as Homecoming Queen." It'd be some ugly person that I didn't know, and I was like, "Why? Why vote for somebody I don't know?" I mean these people get like 50

votes and they're considered Queen, because a lot of the students, like I said earlier, are apathetic.

D: What kind of role do you think fraternities and sororities play in everyday life at Youngstown State?

L: They play a role to a certain extent. I don't notice them too much on campus now, now that I have my Graduate Assistantship. The only things I can remember about the fraternities are them painting the rock in front of Kilcawley, and them doing their annual Paddy Murphy celebration. One year I was at the Candy Counter (Lord knows I didn't need to be there at the time), but they had this bagpiper come down in the middle of the Kilcawley Center, and I was like, "What the hell's going on? Is it like an Irish funeral?" And the brothers of Sigma Chi, I believe; they brought the casket of Paddy Murphy, and went out by the rock to like, mourn, or something. It's a tradition for them, I don't know what it has to do...I think it's a legendary brother, but I'm not sure.

D: What can you tell me about the University's yearbook?

L: The University does not have a yearbook.

D: What do you mean they don't? Yes they do.

L: No.

D: Yes they do, it's The Neon, or something like that.

L: It used to be The Neon, it used to be in. The Neon I'm not sure lasted for us, I don't remember any type of yearbook, however, I've seen Neon yearbooks from the seventies, '77, '78, but I'm not too sure when they got rid of them, I don't know of any.

D: Well, you've mentioned The Jambar a number of times, so obviously you must read it if you write to it. What can you tell me about *The Jambar*?

L: *The Jambar* is the most pathetic piece of journalistic material I have ever read. I have read more profound things in a Playboy magazine or Sports Illustrated magazine than I have read in *The Jambar*. I think the problem with *The Jambar* is that the writers aren't in tune with what the students think about, or what they want to think about. I've been to other campuses and I am in aw with their papers. Kent State, *The Kent Stater*, and I was at University of Southern Mississippi, they had a newspaper, I don't remember the name, and Purdue's. Their papers are produced like everyday and they've got something of value to the student. I mean now you just go in there and they're just bickering about what's going on, and they're pretty late with bringing out the news because it's pretty pathetic when *The Vindicator* puts something in and then the next day they (Jambar) have the exact same article. It's pretty pathetic, and especially who wants to read an article that says "Fathead Says?" I mean this person talks about romance and why males have to put

the seat up or down, and obviously probably has never had a connection with a woman to really say. But I think all in all I think The Jambar could be a lot better.

D: What were some major issues on campus while you attended? Any political or social issues?

L: There weren't really too many political issues at the time, because like I said earlier, students are pretty apathetic; they really don't care. I think there's a group called YSPAN, who's all about political issues and reforms, but I think their group is like four or five students, and I think one day they were talking outside and no one gives them any credit or listens to them. But I do remember there was an anti-war protest when the United States wanted to go to war with Iraq, but nothing too much. I can remember walking by at that anti-war protest and seeing two special task force police officers, Youngstown's finest, and them just like making fun of the anti-war protestors because they're just like laughing at them. They actually had guns, (the special task force officers), and I turned around just to be a smart-aleck and...but, at the same time it was the truth, I was like, "Kent State, huh?" As if they were going to do something to stop the anti-war protestors, and once I did that, they gave me a dirty look and pretty much...they took it seriously. And as far as other issues, there might have been a few issues with the Gay and Lesbian groups wanting respect or something, but I think the biggest issues for YSU students are parking and tuition increases.

D: How do you feel about the diversity of the student population?

L: The student population is very diverse. I think that's a good thing. There are many cultures that are representative from different countries. I think that's good.

D: You don't think it should be more diverse? Or has it changed since you first started?

L: It really hasn't changed since I started. I think now we're seeing a greater diversity among the population because times change, but I haven't noticed much of a difference since I've been here.

D: Who would say was your most memorable instructor you had as an undergrad?

L: There are many. Do you want me to name all of them?

D: Say as many as you like.

L: As an undergraduate?

D: As an undergraduate, because obviously someone had to influence you at some point to go to Grad School, I mean...

L: Not really.

D: No?

L: I have a lot of memorable instructors: my English professors for English 550 and 551 were great. Brian McBride and Ms. Ludt, (those) were probably my favorite instructors early on, because everyone was one with each other, the students weren't bickering among each other and causing drama, we all just really got along. As far as Sociology, I liked Mrs. Gartland. She's hysterical. I've had her for like four or five classes. Geography was pretty good. I had Dr. Campbell and Dr. Buckler. Dr. Buckler was hilarious in weather often. I remember one time where he was holding a globe in his hand, he was walking around, and he tripped on the electrical plug outlet cord, and it was funny. He always reminded me of Col. Sanders, but he was a very good teacher. He was like, (in intense Southern accent) "And the molecules gyrate!" As far as the History department, I would say most of them. Dr. York, Dr. DeBlasio, Dr. Barnes, (although she was Graduate School, not undergraduate). Dr. Berger, Dr. Satre, Dr. Viehe (in undergraduate), Dr. Ayana, Dr. Ladd especially, and I think she's the one that really interested me in pursuing a degree in History and going to Graduate School.

D: Why, what was it about her?

L: She always pushed you to succeed, and that's one of the things that are important – her and Dr. York, but more so Dr. Ladd early on. Dr. Ladd pushed me, I had her for Survey of U.S. History 1 and U.S. History 2. She's part-time faculty; she's one of the best that the department has, and she should really be a full-time professor. She's very good, she's willing to stay after her classes to talk to you about something, and my first semester I took her history class, and every test I improved. She's all about improvement, and there's always room for improvement. I mean going in as a freshman, you're faced with two options: you could be intimidated by the class, or you're a know-it-all. But in-between there's this happy medium that's you're a student, and if you're intimidated by a class that's bad thing; if you know everything, that's a bad thing, you just have to be there, and work hard at what you do to obtain your goal.

D: So when did you graduate with your undergrad?

L: I graduated in May, 1998, (Bachelor's).

D: Do you remember the ceremony?

L: Yes, the ceremony was incredibly long. I don't remember the key-note speaker, but I do remember that his speech was very short and sweet, (no pun intended with our University President) But yea, it was very long, I really don't want to do it again, but I'm forced to.

D: And when did you attend – obviously you're graduating now, but when did you start Graduate School?

L: I started Graduate School in August of 2002, and I've been there ever since. Hopefully I graduate after this semester, and that's a knock on the table.

D: What would you say was your biggest accomplishment in Graduate School?

L: My biggest accomplishment was passing the Comps.

D: Why?

L: It is like...once you've passed the Comps, I think you've accomplished what you're supposed to do. What you're intended to do once you get to Graduate School, is pass those Comps and get your Master's Degree (End of Side A of Tape). (Beginning Side B) So like I said, I was talking about my Graduate Committee Panel; Dr. Barnes, Dr. York, Dr. DeBlasio. They're really great teachers. They've always pushed me to become a better historian, in both the written aspect and the oral aspect of presenting yourself for papers, etc.. And basically the comps were challenging, the written part consisted of three hours of straight writing, and really you need more time to write. And then the orals were an hour, where each professor got twenty-minutes. So that was my greatest accomplishment. After I came home I was so excited, I said, "Mom, we're going to Chi-Chi's," so she took me to Chi-Chi's and when I told her I had passed, she was crying. So I would say that was my biggest achievement.

D: What's your biggest disappointment in Graduate School?

L: In what regards?

D: In any, was there anything that you're disappointed with? With either the department...

L: Well, besides not being asked out to go to lunch on occasions by certain professors, I would really say no. I think our Graduate School in History is one of the best that the University offers. The faculty is just incredible, the accessibility that you have to them, the small number of classes allows the student to be one-on-one with the professor, and really they're just great. I have no complaints and no regrets of going to YSU. On the other hand, there might be one thing that I don't like, and that's probably evident in any University you would go to, is that some things they don't tell you, you're supposed to find out for yourself, like a Thesis. I wasn't told anything or guided that I needed to do Thesis, although I went to non-Thesis option. Really, you need a year for the Thesis, and I procrastinated, so I'm partly to blame. On the other hand I wish I would have known going into the program that I needed to develop a Thesis by end of my first year.

D: So what are your plans now? If you, knock on wood, graduate?

L: Well, I'm going to Dollywood, May 27, in which Dolly Parton is 6'2 in heels. I'll probably work there until August. I was going to go to Doctoral School, but both

institutions sadly rejected me, which is their loss. Currently I've got a temporary teaching license in the state of Florida, and I might go on to teach high school for one to three years in History.

D: Anything else you would like to add?

L: I will just say that my experience at YSU has been a very positive one, and that the whole History Department has worked hard to get me to where I am going to be in life. I think they've produced a good student out of me who was able to be objective in History as well as objective in life. I'm glad that I was able to meet some people in the process, and I would say that's about it.

D: Okay, thank you for your time.