

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Westlake Terrace Project

Resident Experiences

O. H. 697

ATAN TINSLEY

Interviewed

by

Joseph Drobney

on

October 17, 1985

ATAN TINSLEY

Atan Tinsley was born on April 20, 1920 in Columbia, South Carolina. Her family moved to the Struthers area when she was a child. Mrs. Tinsley was educated in the Struthers school system. Atan Tinsley was married to her husband, Herbert, on November 8, 1938.

Mr. and Mrs. Tinsley raised three children: two daughters and a son. The Tinsley family lived in the Westlake Terrace Housing Project during its first decade of existence, then moved to Struthers where Atan and Herbert currently reside. Since 1972, Mrs. Tinsley has been employed by the Struthers Board of Education.

Joseph C. Drobney

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INTERVIEWEE: ATAN TINSLEY

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Drobney

SUBJECT: Blacks in the south, low income housing,  
Youngstown during the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's

DATE: October 17, 1985

D: This is an interview with Mrs. Atan Tinsley for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Westlake Terrace, by Joe Drobney, on October 17, 1985, at 117 Woodbine Avenue, in Struthers, at approximately 3:00 in the afternoon.

Mrs. Tinsley, just to begin with can you tell me a little bit about your early life, for example, where you were born, when you were born, something about your parents? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

T: I was born in Columbia, South Carolina. We lived right in the city of Columbia. I had one brother and two sisters.

D: About when were you born?

T: 1920.

D: What did your parents or your father do?

T: My father worked in a factory and my mother did housework.

D: Do you recall what type of house you and your family lived in?

T: There was a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen, and then a large area with bedrooms upstairs in one complete area.

D: About how long then did you live in Columbia after you were born, which was in 1920?

- T: Seven years. My mother died in 1927, and we moved to Struthers in 1928.
- D: At that time what exactly was the attraction or the main reason why your family kind of up and left Columbia to come up here to Struthers?
- T: My father broke his leg working in the factory, and he couldn't work. My sister was living in Struthers at the time. She told him to come up and stay with her and as he was recuperating he would probably be able to get a job.
- D: How long had your sister and her husband been living in the Struthers area before 1928?
- T: I think she came in 1923.
- D: You were quite young, about three years old.
- T: Yes.
- D: What had been the general reason why she and her husband had moved up here in the first place?
- T: I don't know whether his relatives told him about a better living and better jobs. They moved first to Pennsylvania and then came over to Struthers.
- D: After your sister sent back word to Columbia after your mother died . . .
- T: She came down to get us.
- D: Did she say it was a better job or that there was the possibility of a better paying job for your father? Do you remember how she put it?
- T: A better paying job.
- D: This was in the mills.
- T: Yes.
- D: How about anything else as far as things being better in Youngstown or Struthers for your family than in Columbia, South Carolina? Was the job the only real attraction for your family to move from Columbia up to Struthers?
- T: Being small, all I can remember was that the city was beautiful.
- D: This is which city?

T: Columbia.

D: When your sister came down to get you and told your father that he could get a good job, was there any indication that things would be better for a black family in Struthers or Youngstown than Columbia, South Carolina? Do you remember if there was any kind of hint or general impression of that?

T: Yes, it would be better for him. When he had his leg broken on the job, they did not give him any compensation or anything. He just lost the job; that was it. Here, it was just a better opportunity.

D: In 1928 the family which would be your father, you . . .

T: My father came first.

D: What about you and the remaining family? Who took care of you, for example, when your father came up here to Youngstown?

T: My aunt. We were living with my aunt.

D: Was this in the Columbia, South Carolina area?

T: Yes, it was on the same street, about five houses from where I lived.

D: How long did this situation go on that you lived with your aunt?

T: I would say about a couple of months.

D: And then you came up to Struthers.

T: Yes.

D: In the meantime had your father gotten a job?

T: Yes, he has a job at Sharon Steel.

D: At Sharon Steel in Lowellville, Ohio.

T: Yes.

D: When you made the trip up, how did you move from Columbia, South Carolina to Struthers?

T: We came by train.

D: What do you remember about the train ride? How long was it? Do you remember any of the cities or big stations you might have stopped at? How long was the trip?

T: I can't remember. I imagine maybe about two and a half days or more, but I know it was segregated. I never knew anything about being segregated because you just were separated. I know we had to sit in a back coach. We weren't allowed in the other coaches. That is about all I can remember.

D: What was your initial impression or what do you remember about coming to Struthers? First of all, what season of the year was it?

T: It was wintertime in January.

D: Tell me, what was among the first things you noticed about or remember about the Struthers area?

T: It was snowing, a very heavy snow.

D: Was that the first time you ever saw snow?

T: No, it would snow in Columbia, but you could run out and play in it without a coat. It wasn't cold or anything. We had to take a trolley car from Youngstown to Struthers, and we got off on State Street. We only lived about two and a half blocks from State Street in Struthers.

D: What street was that that was the first place you lived in up in this area?

T: It was Liberty Street in Struthers.

D: Who all was living in that? Was it a house?

T: It was an apartment.

D: Who all was living in the apartment?

T: There were blacks and whites. It was integrated.

D: An integrated apartment. Did you kind of notice that immediately? Was that a situation you would have seen in Columbia, South Carolina?

T: When I was in South Carolina, there were some whites. There was one who was a friend of my mother and we played with her child.

D: How about when you moved to Liberty Street? Was Liberty Street like a combination of different ethnic groups?

T: Yes, it was. There were Italians, Puerto Ricans, Slovaks; it was just integrated.

D: How many were in the apartment? Obviously there was you. Who else was there?

T: Seven different apartments.

D: In the apartment you lived in.

T: There were eight, my sister and her husband, his son, my other sister and myself and my sister's two children.

D: And your father.

T: And my father.

D: That seems to be a total of around eight.

T: Eight, yes.

D: Was this a fairly crowded situation?

T: Yes, it was very crowded because it was only two rooms.

D: Two rooms and eight people. How about your education once you got up here to Struthers? What were the schools you went to? What do you remember about school?

T: I went to Elm Street School. That was the first school.

D: That was here in Struthers?

T: Struthers, yes. We came in January, and my sister enrolled me in February. The school was very nice and the children. I can remember my principal, Mr. Fair; he was a beautiful person. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Woolum. She was very nice.

D: Was it a long walk for you to school?

T: About four blocks. It wasn't too far from where we lived.

D: Elm Street School, that was an elementary school.

T: Yes.

D: How about beyond Elm Street?

T: After Elm Street we moved to Woodbine. That would be further up from where I live now to a larger house. We needed a larger house.

D: So you moved from an apartment on Liberty to a home on Woodbine in Struthers?

T: Yes, we bought a home on Woodbine in Struthers.

D: In about what year was that?

T: Probably about a year after that or less than a year.

D: 1929?

T: Yes, I think.

D: What school did you . . .

T: Then I went to Highland Avenue School. I attended Highland Avenue School from third grade to sixth grade.

D: Was that fairly close?

T: About two and a half blocks away.

D: You were on Woodbine from 1929 until about when?

T: Until I married in 1938.

D: During this period did you or your sister or any of your family have an occasion to go up into Youngstown a lot?

T: Quite often.

D: Tell me a little bit about that. What were the reasons, shopping or movies?

T: To shop and go to the movies, yes. On Saturdays we would go shopping and then we would go to a movie. Sometimes on Sunday we would go out. Although in Struthers we did have a movie, but it was segregated.

D: You had a segregated movie house in Struthers?

T: Yes, a segregated movie house in Struthers.

D: What was the name of that movie house?

T: The name of the theater was the Ritz Theater. It was the first one, and then . . . The first theater was small and the company opened the Ritz Theater a block away from the old one. It was segregated.

D: By segregated you mean that blacks sat in one area.

T: Yes, in one area. There was one little area for the blacks to sit, and then the rest was for the whites.

D: When you went to the movie house, were you kind of told



directly by the management or did the usher lead you into the movie section or the section of the movie house to always the one section? How did you know? Did your sister or your friends kind of let you know that you had to sit in one section of the theater, for example? How did that work?

T: They let you know.

D: They didn't have a sign, did they?

T: No, there wasn't a sign or anything, but they let you know that there was just a certain section you had to sit.

D: This was in Struthers. How about when you went to Youngstown? First of all, did you ever take the trolley to Youngstown?

T: Oh, yes, all of the time.

D: That was the way to go.

T: Yes, that was the way to go by going on the trolley.

D: About how much did a trolley ride to downtown Youngstown cost?

T: If I'm not mistaken, I think it was 10¢.

D: You said that the weekend was the big time to go to Youngstown.

T: Yes, to go to Youngstown and go shopping. We would go to Strouss', McKelvey's, Penney's, and there also was Murphy's, McCrory's, and Hughes' Market. Strouss' and Penney's were department stores. Murphy's and McCrory's were five and dime stores. Hughes' was a meat market.

The show that I liked the best was down on the lower east end, although we went to the Palace when they would have the vaudeville.

D: Tell me about that; you saw some vaudeville down at the Palace?

T: Oh, yes. There were different bands and people coming in.

D: Was downtown Youngstown much more vibrant or packed with people then than it is now?

T: Oh, yes.

D: Tell me a little bit about how you would compare Youngstown then to now as far as people and activity.

- T: To me it would be most like a ghost town now. You could hardly get in the stores it was so crowded then. It seemed as though everyone would be in Youngstown especially on Fridays. Then on Sundays we went to the different movies because there were quite a few movie houses. I remember one time when my sister took us to the Park. It was like a burlesque, but it wasn't like a burlesque as you would see it now.
- D: At the Park Theater.
- T: Yes, you just loved Youngstown. It was just a beautiful place to be, with all of the stores and the different varieties of things that you could buy.
- D: Was it like Columbia, South Carolina in the fact that blacks and whites pretty much shopped at the same places and went to the same . . .
- T: Yes.
- D: Did they go to the same theaters in Youngstown?
- T: Yes, it was integrated. We didn't have any problems or anything in the movies. You sat where you wanted to.
- D: You really can't remember any type of discrimination or segregation in movie houses or in stores in downtown Youngstown?
- T: No, I can't. It seemed as though everyone was friendly, all the salespeople and everyone. There weren't any problems. I can't remember any.
- D: During this time we are talking about your father is employed at Sharon Steel.
- T: Yes.
- D: By now we are into the 1930's. Do you personally remember about the time as the Depression set in if your father got laid off?
- T: My brother-in-law was laid off, but my dad was still able to work two or three days. He wasn't entirely laid off.
- D: Your father would work instead of maybe five or six days a week maybe two or three days a week.
- T: Yes, but my brother-in-law worked at Youngstown Sheet & Tube, and he was laid off.
- D: Did he ever talk about work or wages or conditions on the

job, things like that?

- T: No, only he did when he first came to Struthers. He said there was prejudice. I imagine it was because of the jobs with so many different people coming in. I don't know whether he was involved or whether the other man talked about it, but he used to tell us that. He said that there were strikes and different things that would happen in the mill because I would imagine of the many blacks who were coming in.
- D: As you move up into 1928 and 1929 and into the early 1930's, were there still a lot of blacks coming up from the south? Did you notice new faces and new names and did you meet new friends?
- T: Yes, there were quite a few who were coming. They kept coming, yes. I imagine one person would write and say how nice it was with the jobs and better opportunities, so then their family would come.
- D: Did you or your family ever know anybody back in Columbia who maybe eventually came up to Youngstown or Struthers or who you might have contacted and told them about Youngstown, or Struthers?
- T: My sister told my cousin and she came and then her mother and father came. Later on my cousin and their family came.
- D: So once you and your immediate family got up here, eventually many other members of your more distant family did.
- T: Came, yes.
- D: Was it mainly the economic attraction of good jobs?
- T: Yes, that was it.
- D: Do you remember any immediate effects on your family at the time of the Depression? Now we are into 1931, 1932, 1933 as you are getting into junior high and high school. Do you remember direct effects like shortages of things, maybe having to go out to get odd jobs to help the family? Now your father only had a partial income. Do you remember some of those things?
- T: There were hard times, but then we had a garden. There was a lake, Lake Hamilton, about six or seven miles from where we lived. Lake Hamilton was on the south side of Struthers. We could walk to the lake and fish.
- D: We are talking about on Woodbine now.

- T: Yes. My brother-in-law would go fishing. Woodbine was integrated with Slovaks, Italians. You name it; it was everything on our street.
- D: This was the way it was back then.
- T: Everyone was just like one, big family. If you had something and we didn't have it, then you would share. That was the way we lived.
- D: Things never really seemed to get really bad for your family during the Depression?
- T: It was bad in one way.
- D: In what way? You couldn't buy new clothes.
- T: No clothes, no. There was always someone who could give you a hand-me-down. Then in grade school we had a lunch program for the children who could eat at lunchtime. It was very good food that they would give you. Every day that was good. Everyone just shared. It was just share, share. Then the owners of the stores were very good. They would let you have credit. When you were able to pay, you would pay.
- D: That was kind of a usual thing that a store owner during the Depression would give a customer who he knew credit.
- T: Yes, during the Depression giving them credit, yes.
- D: Now we are into the middle 1930's. About this time you are probably going into junior high and high school. Which junior high or high school did you go to?
- T: I went to Struthers High.
- D: Was Struthers High still the original building where it is located now?
- T: Yes, where it is located now.
- D: Was that grades nine through twelve?
- T: Seven through twelve.
- D: Does anything really stand out in your mind like big events or general impressions you got from Struthers High School? Did you enjoy school?
- T: Oh, yes, very much. There were different activities. It was very good. I had a very good life at the school. Only one thing stands out in my memory. There wasn't much prejudice,

except for one teacher who was prejudice. In most of all my classes I was the only black one in the class. In the majority of my classes I was the only black.

D: But there were other black families in Struthers?

T: There were other black families in Struthers, yes.

As I was saying in the apartments there were all different nationalities. We all played together. There was one Italian lady who made this Italian bread. She would share; so there wasn't any prejudice; we just got along beautifully. In high school it was still the same except for this one teacher who showed the prejudice.

D: That would be about 1938 when you graduated.

T: Yes, I graduated in 1938.

D: During this whole time then up until 1938 you are still living on Woodbine?

T: Yes.

D: Was your father or your brother-in-law or anybody you know ever a part of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) government programs or the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps)?

T: Yes, when I married my husband, later he was on the WPA for a short time. His brother went to the CCC Camp and my brother went to the CCC Camp. His brother went to Zanesville, Ohio and my brother went to Chillicothe, Ohio.

D: What were some of the things that either your brother or your brother-in-law were doing with the CCC? What exactly did they do? Did they ever talk about that?

T: My brother was a cook in his camp. Then my brother-in-law worked in the office; he was pretty smart so he took part in the filing.

D: You mentioned that at the time your future husband also worked a little bit for the WPA.

T: In fact he helped to build Roosevelt Park in Campbell.

D: At the time he was working on Roosevelt Park, you two were engaged or had you been married yet?

T: He was working and then we got married. After that we lived in Struthers about a year before our first baby was born. Then we moved to Youngstown in June of 1940.

- D: At the time you knew and were going with him, you were in high school in 1936, 1937, 1938; do you remember that he was working with the WPA? What were some of the other types of jobs he had to get along?
- T: He also worked at a car place. Then later on he became a mechanic.
- D: He was and is a mechanic.
- T: Yes.
- D: Where did you and your husband first live?
- T: We lived on Riffle Street.
- D: Was this an apartment?
- T: No, it was a house. It was my uncle's house; we lived with my uncle for a while.
- D: At this time when you got married in 1938, did you have a little odd job or had done that kind of work?
- T: I wasn't working; he was working. I didn't do any work.
- D: When you lived with your uncle there for that time, was the house crowded?
- T: No, it was just him and his wife.
- D: By this time we are into 1939 and 1940. When did you or your husband first hear of Westlake Terrace Housing Project?
- T: His aunt was telling him that she was going to move, to put an application in. In fact, the application was accepted. But then her brother bought a house in Youngstown--it was a great, big double duplex--and he told her to come and stay there. She decided not to go to Westlake Terrace. My husband decided to put in for one, and he did and we were accepted.
- D: Tell me a little bit about that. Do you remember what all he had to do? Did he have to go down to the office? Did he have to show . . .
- T: Yes, he had to go to the office. He had to take our marriage license to make sure we were married. Someone came out and investigated.
- D: Was it a requirement? Was it your understanding that there was a requirement there in 1940 that in order to move into those apartments in Westlake that you had to be married?

- T: Yes, you had to be married. I remember one incident where someone said a couple wasn't married, and they did prove that they were married because they had their license.
- D: No singles, all married?
- T: No singles, all married, yes.
- D: How about income requirements? Do you remember anything about that?
- T: You had to have a certain income.
- D: You had to have a job?
- T: Yes, I'm sure. I know that everyone who lived in the block that we lived in and also in the rear . . . Yes, everyone had to have some type of income coming in order to pay the rent.
- D: You told me that an inspector . . . Would that be from the YMHA (Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority) that actually came out or someone came out to investigate?
- T: Just like to interview us to make sure. I don't know whether it was the condition where you lived or what if that would help you to get in the Westlake Terrace.
- D: You mean you were under the impression that if you were living in either crowded or poor conditions you might be at an advantage to get in?
- T: Yes, I think so. I think you would have a better advantage.
- D: At this time from 1939 into 1940 do you happen to remember about what the family income was?
- T: I can't remember, but I know we had to pay \$18.75 for the rent for a one bedroom apartment.
- D: That was your first rent there at Westlake?
- T: Yes, and a \$10 deposit. I can remember distinctly. On the lease it said that when you moved out, you would clean the apartment after you moved out and you would get your deposit back. Everyone was kidding saying that they would never give the deposit back. Anyway, when my husband and I moved back to Struthers, we cleaned the apartment just like we found it. Several weeks later in the mail we got our \$10 back.
- D: You got the money back; they were good for their word.

T: Yes.

D: You are saying that the initial rent that you remember was \$18.75 a month?

T: Yes.

D: Now did everybody pay \$18.75 a month?

T: I think it was according to the apartment with how many rooms you had. Mostly it was the income because it didn't go up.

D: I have heard something that it was maybe one-quarter of your monthly income or something. Did you ever hear any figure on that?

T: I imagine so, yes. There was a little humor, too, that I can remember. People were losing the keys so often that they decided to charge you a quarter to let you back into the apartment.

D: If you lost your keys, you had to go to the office?

T: Yes, and then the custodian would have to come down to open the door so that you could get in. Then they said that they were going to start charging everybody a quarter to get back in. That made everyone watch their keys. I can remember distinctly pinning my key somewhere on my body so that we wouldn't have to pay that quarter. I don't know whether they really made you pay, but that was the saying of what they were going to do.

D: When you moved into Westlake, was that the first time you had ever been in the general Westlake area? You mentioned, of course, having gone down into Youngstown many times for shopping and the movies.

T: Yes, it was the first time. There was a little humor in that. When my husband and I told my sister that we were going to move into the Westlake apartments, she didn't want us to move. At that time I imagine that was kind of a little tough place to live.

D: A tough area?

T: Yes. She didn't want us to move to Youngstown.

D: To the Westlake area, the Westlake Crossing area?

T: I imagine so, around in that vicinity. She didn't want us to move there.



- D: Do you remember the day you moved to Westlake from Struthers? What were your first impressions of your apartment, of the general surroundings?
- T: I can remember it was apartment 16, and the sidewalk still wasn't finished. Only a certain amount of people could move into that building.
- D: Was this in the Summer, by the way?
- T: No, it was in the Spring. My husband had seen the apartment, but I didn't see it until the day we moved. Compared to the home where we had lived, it was nice, but it was like having your own place. It was just a beautiful place.
- D: That was what it meant to you, your own place?
- T: My own place, yes.
- D: By this time you had one child?
- T: Yes, one child.
- D: You had to bring your own furniture, right?
- T: Oh, yes, everything, but they had the stove and the refrigerator. You had to bring everything else. They had what they called the "washhouse". It was in the first apartment building, so I had to walk from my building down there. It was very nice because as I remember they gave you certain days or you chose what day you would like to go down to the place to wash.
- D: You mean the laundry was the washhouse?
- T: Yes, the laundry.
- D: Did they have their own machines?
- T: No, you had to supply . . . First, they did have some machines. Then later on it said if you had one, that you were free to install it, and I did have a washer. I used my own washer. I would go on Mondays because I preferred washing on Mondays. I was there at 7:00 and maybe it would take three hours because they had a blow dryer and your clothes dried quickly. I always liked to get up early to wash.
- D: Basically, you are saying that you picked the day and that was the day you did your laundry.
- T: Yes, you did your laundry on whatever day it was convenient for you.

- D: How about things like keeping the apartment clean and making sure that things were fixed? Did the office send inspectors or did they tell you to give you some rules that this was how you had to keep up your apartment in your general area?
- T: They said they were going to have inspectors every so often, but I don't remember any time an inspector coming in. I think when they saw the appearance . . . I guess the custodian would come down and see the appearance because I never had anybody come in. We did keep the apartment clean; we kept the outside clean. I don't remember anyone coming in inspecting my place.
- D: For the first few years you lived there at Westlake who was responsible for cutting the grass in your area or shoveling the snow? Was that a maintenance man?
- T: Yes, it was a maintenance man who would cut the grass and shovel snow, although I would go out and sweep around the yard. The maintenance man did all of the work.
- D: How about in that general area? Were there plenty of stores, food stores, within an easy walk or were you kind of isolated from places you needed to get to?
- T: No, because I lived in 16 and right across the street there was a store.
- D: This was on Federal?
- T: On Federal, yes; there was a market. I can't remember the other little store. It didn't have too much in it, but there was a second little store. The name we gave the grocery store was Susie's because the owner's name was Susie. The little store didn't have quite what Susie's store had. Then there was the Labate store on the corner of Federal and Wirt Streets, and that was a big store.
- D: Did you notice or did it become obvious to you that that entire section of the project was all black as opposed to the section up on the other side of Madison? Do you remember how that worked? Did anybody down at the office specifically let on to your husband that when you moved in that they put all of the blacks here and all of the whites over there?
- T: No, we really didn't know it. I was surprised when we did move and found out that it was all white, but then it was alright with me because it was a place to live. I accepted it. I didn't think anymore about it. I just thought it was strange after all of these years of living with different nationalities.

- D: When you were living in Struthers, you lived in mixed areas?
- T: Yes, in mixed areas. Then, after you are kind of segregated. Still, yet, the people would meet in the stores and we would talk to each other. I really didn't mind.
- D: In those stores across Federal and in that general kind of area with the houses across the street or in the general area of the Westlake project, was it all mainly a black area?
- T: Yes, it was. It was mainly a black area. I can remember only further up it was white.
- D: Up toward Madison and then across?
- T: Yes, or going up Federal Street.
- D: The first few years after you moved into Westlake, of course, were the war years. First of all, was your husband in the service?
- T: Yes, he was. After my second daughter was born we requested a larger apartment with another bedroom. We only had the one bedroom and my daughter was getting a little bit larger. We didn't want her in the same room, so we moved to Apartment 56 and that was about two buildings up from us.
- D: You are talking about 1942, 1943.
- T: 1943.
- D: Is that about the year your husband went into the service then?
- T: Yes, he did. He came back in 1945.
- D: So from about 1943 until 1945 you were on your own down there.
- T: Yes, I was.
- D: What about the rent? Did it go up or down?
- T: It was the same. I can remember distinctly that the government only gave me \$90 a month.
- D: You were only making \$90 a month and then rent still stayed one-quarter of that \$90 a month or the same rate?
- T: Yes, the same rate.
- D: Did it seem like almost everybody else's husband was going off to the war as well in that whole area in the whole block of apartments?

- T: I can only remember in my block that I was the only one whose husband had gone to war. In the block in the rear there was another lady whose husband had gone to war, and in the block just before mine, my girlfriend's husband had gone to war. Those were the ones I knew who had gone to war.
- D: What do you remember about things being rationed or shortages of things during the war years in Youngstown? Do you remember anything about that?
- T: Yes, I had a rationing book. Meat was very scarce. You couldn't buy meat I guess with all the money you had. The Labate store was very nice, so I was able to get meat. Everything was rationed, but we had food. We got what we wanted because Labate's owner was very nice.
- D: Did you get the book like once a year and then it had coupons for each month or did you get it once a month?
- T: It seemed like we got it once a month if I'm not mistaken. That is about all I can remember. Then you went to the store. You bought mostly the food you needed, like the produce you would need.
- D: How about things like clothes or anything else? Did the war affect you in any way back on the home front?
- T: No, it didn't affect the clothing. My mother-in-law was a seamstress and she made my children's clothes and my clothes. We didn't want anything when it came to clothes or anything.
- D: Were you able to get along pretty well on the money that was being sent home?
- T: With the amount that I got from the government and then his mother being very good and also my sister being very good.
- D: That \$90 a month you got from the government was kind of on top of the fact that your husband was getting his pay overseas. They sent this money directly to you.
- T: Yes, to me. The \$90 would take care of my two children and myself.
- D: During the war years I heard a couple of things that they used to have air raids down at the project. Do you remember anything about that?
- T: I can't remember although I know from the siren . . . I'm pretty sure we would draw the blinds. One time we went down into the basement or laundry room when they had an air drill. I can kind of remember that but not too well about the air

raids. We would hear the sirens. I know we weren't supposed to go near the windows, and we would pull the drapes. I think one time we went down into the basement in one of the buildings.

D: Your husband came home in 1945 and shortly after was discharged?

T: Yes.

D: Then he got a job as a mechanic someplace?

T: Yes, he did at Gough Motors; it was a Ford company. He was a mechanic there for twenty-nine years.

D: During the war years up until the time when you left Westlake you had two very small children. Was there any type of a recreational activity for very small children at Westlake? Did you meet at some type of community center, all the mother's with children especially during the war?

T: They had a well baby clinic. I think it was every Tuesday you could take your children to the clinic. The doctor would . . .

D: At the project in Westlake?

T: Yes, at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) there was a clinic. I would take them to the clinic. My oldest girl went to nursery school; they had a nursery school at the clinic; so she went to the nursery school.

D: Right at the YMCA?

T: At the YMCA. Then later on they moved the nursery school into one of the houses in the project, so she went to that. Her teacher was Mrs. Dunn. They went for half of a day.

D: Was this mainly just during the war or after 1945 did they still keep the clinic going there?

T: I'm pretty sure the clinic was still enforced after the war, yes. It was still there.

D: Were you under the impression that there was also a similar clinic up on the white side of the project or are you not really sure how that worked?

T: No, I'm not sure whether there was a white clinic. Sometimes we would walk up that way to go to the stores on Belmont. They had the A & P and the different stores. We would walk up that way, but I don't know anything about that.

- D: During the time when you lived there in Westlake both during and immediately after the war would you say that generally the people around you and on your block of apartments were pretty conscientious as far as keeping things looking good? You indicated that you and your husband kept up your apartment.
- T: Yes, all the apartments on West Federal and West Federal Court were kept up. It was beautiful. We had flowers and even some people in their backs had little gardens, so it was very well kept. Everything was nice and clean. Everyone I knew kept their apartment very clean.
- D: During the whole time when you lived at Westlake did you ever have any real problems with the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority as far as problems from the office or when you needed something done? Could you go down to the office? Did they seem to be concerned, always sending maintenance men out and things like that?
- T: Yes, they were very good about sending a maintenance man. I never had any problems. Mrs. Nulff was a very wonderful person.
- D: Who was Mrs. Nulff?
- T: She was in charge. I guess she was like the manager of the project.
- D: Down at the office?
- T: Yes, at the office.
- D: And the office was on West Federal?
- T: On West Federal, yes.
- D: Was that the main office or again was there an office up on the other side?
- T: No, I don't know whether it was the main office for blacks or for the whole project, but I know it was near my building.
- D: In your area?
- T: In my area, so I don't know whether they had another one for the whites or not.
- D: You moved out in what year?
- T: 1949.
- D: Altogether, you lived there going on ten years.

T: Yes.

D: Why exactly in 1949 did you move?

T: My husband's father's wife died, and he wanted my husband to move back to Struthers. I also knew that Struthers had a good school system, and I wanted my children to go to a school that was good. After my father-in-law asked us to please come back and stay with him then we moved back to Struthers.

D: By this time were either of your daughters going to the Covington School near Westlake?

T: Yes, my daughter Joyce was in third grade and my youngest daughter, Gloria, had just started kindergarten.

D: Did you have any general impressions of the Covington School? First of all, did all of the kids from both parts of the project go to Covington School?

T: Yes, they did. It was nice. Mr. Elmer Dunn was the principal.

D: In your ten years of Westlake housing project did you ever see Paul Strait or some of the big YMHA administrators? Did you ever notice them walking through the project?

T: I remember Mr. Strait, yes. He would come through the project. I remember him distinctly. I would also see him in the office.

D: Did he kind of look things over and stop to ask people how things were? Was it kind of an inspection tour that he was conducting?

T: Yes, just looking and speaking. He was very nice when you would go to the office. We never really had a problem. As long as we kept up our apartment and we didn't have the problems in the homes, so no one ever said anything to us. It was very nice.

D: In the almost ten years between 1940 and 1949 when you left Westlake in 1949, had the general atmosphere or environment changed at all? Were people still as conscientious? Was Westlake as good a place to live in in 1949 as it was when you originally moved in?

T: Yes, when I moved out, it still was a nice neighborhood. I remember when I lived in 16 that it was very nice. The neighbors and the children played together. Then when we moved to 56, the neighbors were beautiful. It was still a nice neighborhood to live because I even hated to move back to Struthers. In a way I wanted to and in a way I didn't want to because I had met so many friends and different people from

different backgrounds. It was just wonderful. I really didn't want to move.

D: Did it seem, when you left in 1949, that they still enforced the policy that you had to be married and had to show some type of income to live in the project?

T: Everyone I knew. In the two buildings on West Federal and the West Federal Court I knew the majority of everyone, and everyone had to be married. After I left I would still go back and visit my friends. Then they all began to move. As soon as everyone I knew moved out then I stopped going. Sooner or later they bought homes.

D: You would say that really, originally, for at least the first ten or eleven years, the Westlake Housing Project was a good kind of a place where you went for a first home?

T: Yes.

D: Then when you had saved up or when you could afford to move on to a home of your own later, would you say this was a general rule of everyone?

T: Yes, it was because every one of my friends and even some of their acquaintances who I knew when they moved out, they bought their own homes. In fact there was a reunion about four or five years ago. It was a reunion of the former members in the Westlake Terrace in the apartments around where I lived. They said that they had a beautiful time. Everyone was talking about the old times. It was a happy time. Now it is different. You can see and read about it.

D: You would say that in the nine or ten years you did spend at Westlake you and your husband and your children generally had a good time?

T: Yes, it was a very wonderful place to live. Even the friends I met in the project, we are still friendly. It was just a happy place to live.

D: Thank you very much, Mrs. Tinsely. I certainly appreciate this.

END OF INTERVIEW