YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown, Westlake Terrace

Personal Experience

O.H. 867

A.J. CARTER

Interviewed

by

Joseph C. Drobney

on

November 7, 1985

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: A.J. Carter

INTERVIEWER: Joseph C. Drobney

SUBJECT: Westlake Terrace, blacks in Youngstown during the 1920s and 1930s

DATE: November 7, 1985

D: This is an interview with A.J. Carter for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Westlake Terrace project, by Joseph Drobney, on November 7, 1985, at 602 Covington Street, Youngstown, Ohio, at 10:00 a.m.

Just to begin, Mr. Carter, tell me something about your early life. For example, tell me about your parents, how many brothers and sisters you had, and where and when you were born.

C: [I have] one brother and one sister. I was born in Georgia on March 29, 1904. I don't remember anything about my father, he died when I was six months old.

D: How long did you live in Georgia?

C: Off and on from the time I was born until I was 21 years old. The rest of the time I was out of there I was in Alabama.

D: Did you have a chance to get an education as you were growing up? Did you go to school?

C: Very scantly.

D: I take it that when you did go it was a segregated school.

C: Yes, it was a segregated school.

D: Did you have to go a long way to school? Did you have to walk?

C: Yes, I had to walk a long ways.

D: Do you remember anything about the teacher? Was it a white teacher or a black teacher?

C: A black teacher.

D: Was that the way it worked in all schools?

C: At that time in a segregated school, yes.

D: About how many years of formal education did you have in Georgia and Alabama?

C: About five. I had to stop to go to work on the farms. We didn't have a father, and that made it hard for me.

D: Did you have to do a lot to support the family?

C: That's right.

D: Was your mother alive when you were growing up?

C: Yes, she was alive.

D: Did she ever do any types of work?

C: She worked in the field on the farm.

D: Did you folks have your own farm?

C: No, we were tenant farmers.

D: What was grown on the farm you worked on?

C: Cotton, corn, and sugar cane.

D: Was it a big farm?

C: I would say they owned three of four plantations. The biggest I stayed on was the Kendrick Plantation.

D: Was that in Georgia?

C: Yes, Charley County, Georgia.

D: Did your family move from farm to farm?

C: Yes. We didn't own a lot of land.

D: Where did you live when you were working on somebody else's farm?

C: We lived in whatever shack they built for us to live in.

D: During the summer and during the growing season you in the fields, but what about when you got into January and February?

C: That was when you got your schooling.

D: So you worked hard most of the months of the year and then in the dead of winter was when you could to school.

C: Yes, that's how the system worked back then.

D: Was this a general rule for most of the black people you knew?

C: Yes. Some of them were a little more prosperous than others, and it would give that kid a longer education.

D: How about black landowners in the South? Did you know anybody who owned their own farm?

C: I had an uncle who owned 600 acres of land down there.

D: The large farmers who you worked for, were they white or black?

C: All white.

D: How exactly was a farm laborer paid?

C: I know some who worked for 30 cents a day, but mostly it was $10 a month plus board.

D: This was for a whole family?

C: I'm not talking about the whole family. That was just the man. When you sharecropped, the whole family worked there. When the end of the time for harvesting and selling cotton, you would divide the other crops in half. He [the plantation owner] would claim the mule and the and part of the fertilizer, and you would go half with the stuff if you made anything.

D: So you had to split any profits with the owner of the land.

C: That's right.

D: How about people you knew who ended up going to the north to places like Youngstown, Detroit, or Cleveland?

C: A lot of them left after the boll weevils hit.

D: About when was that?

C: The boll weevils started hitting a little in 1919. They just devastated things.

D: This was in Georgia and Alabama?

C: All the Southern states in the cotton belt [were hit]. They had taken hold of the whole entire cotton belt.

D: When this occurred, obviously many of the black farm laborers had to go someplace else to find another way of making a living.

C: That's right. You would work all year and the boll weevils came and then you didn't have anything.

D: You ended up moving to Youngstown in the mid-1920s. Who did you know, anybody, a relative, a friend?

C: Yes, I had relatives in Youngstown. They came in the early 1920s.

D: Did they send back letters?

C: I came by myself.

D: What did you hear about Youngstown? Why did you come? What was the attraction?

C: I had relatives here. There was fairly good money here at that time.

D: Where?

C: In the steel plants. United States Steel, Republic Steel Corporation, Youngstown Sheet & Tube, and Sharon Steel Corporation and a whole lot of fabricating plants were here at that time.

D: So obviously there was an economic attraction.

C: That's right, it was an economic attraction. They paid higher in the steel plants here than they did in the South at that time.

D: Which area had steel plants in the South?

C: Birmingham, Alabama and Gadsden, Alabama. The Tennessee Coal Line Railroad, which was a subsidiary of United States Steel Corporation, was big. Then you had the Willodine Company in Birmingham.

D: Did you ever know anyone who worked in the steel mills in the South during the 1920s?

C: Yes. I worked for a little bit for Republic down there.

D: Oh, you did.

C: Yes.

D: About what year did you begin?

C: 1924.

D: This was in Birmingham.

C: Yes, in Birmingham, Alabama. It was on the number 6 car line between Birmingham and Ainsley.

D: They kind of owned everything.

C: Yeah.

D: Where did you live? Was it company housing?

C: I didn't live in the company housing at that time. I stayed where I knew I could go back and forth to work.

D: Was your mother there with you?

C: No, there wasn't anybody there but my cousin and me.

D: Did you rent a room or live in a house?

C: It was a house.

D: What do you remember about Birmingham in the 1920s?

C: It was a pretty fast place at the time.

D: Was it getting to be a big city?

C: Oh, it was a big city.

D: What did you do in Republic?

C: I worked as an iron breaker.

D: You worked there for about a year?

C: I didn't work there quite that long, but I worked there for a while.

D: Do you remember what your wages were while you were there?

C: I was making about 30 or 35 cents an hour. They were paying 50 cents up here for the same kind of work.

D: How about the hours down there?

C: [They were] 12 hour days at that time.

D: Was that five or six days a week?

C: It was seven sometimes.

D: I imagine there was no such thing as overtime.

C: You didn't get overtime, no.

D: Were the steel mills of Birmingham in the early 1920s a place where a lot of people like yourself--black farm workers and people from the rural areas--were coming in to get jobs?

C: Yes, they were coming there because there were a lot of mines around there. There were a lot of coal mines and ore mines around there.

D: Were there a lot of whites working in the steel industry?

C: Yes, but mostly heaters and stuff like that.

D: How about the foremen?

C: All supervision was white.

D: How about pay? Did you get any feeling that whites got better pay for doing the same type of work, or were the toughest jobs for blacks?

C: You got to work the jobs all right. I never heard anyone say anything about discriminatory pay. If you work on the same job, you got the same money. I have seen fellows' checks. If we had the same amount of hours, we got the same amount of money. I never saw it, but I have heard that there was discriminatory pay.

D: There was not type of health insurance protection or anything, right?

C: No, there wasn't. If you got hurt, you would go to the company hospital that they had. Other than that, I don't know about compensation or anything like that at the time.

D: What exactly made the final decision for you to move to Youngstown? Had you been thinking about it a long time?

C: I had been thinking about going north when I was a kid.

D: In other works, that was a general hope of a lot of blacks, especially farming blacks, in the South in the early 1920s.

C: There was the works that were supposed to be true that it was the promised land.

D: In things like pay?

C: That's right.

D: Were you led to believe that as a black person you would be treated any different or better off?

C: Yes, yes. Down there you couldn't vote unless you owned property. They would see to keep you so poor and in debt all the time that very few of them could own property. Therefore, they discriminated against your own vote, they franchised it.

D: Did you ever vote while you were in the South?

C: No, sir. No man voted down there unless he owned property.

D: Was this true of both whites and blacks?

C: I mean no black man could vote.

D: You never knew of any blacks who voted?

C: I knew blacks who voted, but they owned property. Blacks who didn't own property didn't vote. That was the law in the state of Georgia.

D: How about a white who didn't own property, could he vote?

C: I don't know about that, but I think that most of them who did own property didn't care about voting anyway.

D: You thought that moving north would improve you not only economically, but as a black man you were going to be better off?

C: That's right.

D: How exactly was the trip made when you came up here?

C: [I] took a train.

D: Do you remember anything about the train ride? It had been the first time you ever came to the north, right?

C: Yes.

D: Was it a couple of days? Do you remember anything about the ride?

C: We left from Atlanta. It was about a 24 hour ride.

D: What time of year was it?

C: I left on October 6, 1925.

D: What was the first thing you noticed about Youngstown?

C: I noticed it was a smokey town. It was a smoky and dirty town.

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

C: Oh, no. I saw snow at home. It wasn't regular like it is here. It would snow about every two or three years there.

D: Where did you first live when you moved up to Youngstown?

C: 36 Morris Street.

D: That was in the [Mahoning] river bend area?

C: Yes.

D: Who did you live with?

C: I lived with my uncle.

D: This was in a house or an apartment?

C: Apartment.

D: How long were you in Youngstown before you got a job?

C: I didn't hunt for a job until the next Monday.

D: Where did you get that job?

C: U.S. Steel, at the Upper Union Works.

D: Where was that at?

C: The lower Union Works was on the left hand side in back of where this welding company is now, Madison Welding, and the other one was on the north side of Madison Welding.

D: How long did you work there?

C: I worked for U.S. Steel from October until May of the next year.

D: What exactly did you do for U.S. Steel?

C: I worked on the billet shears.

D: How about pay?

C: I was making 51 cents an hour for 10 hours.

D: Did the factory itself seem to be any safer, any different than the one in Birmingham?

C: Much safer. The mill was much safer at that time here than they were in the South.

D: There was no such thing as safety regulations in the South?

C: There were safety regulations, but they weren't strict or enforced.

D: After U.S. Steel, where did you work?

C: I went to Youngstown Sheet & Tube.

D: Were they know for better pay?

C: At that time they had bathhouses, places where you could change your clothes. U.S. Steel did not have any.

D: So, the working conditions were better?

C: Yes.

D: How long did you work there?

C: Until 1928.

D: About two years or so then. Was it the same pay?

C: I was making a little bit more.

D: Were you still living on Morris Street?

C: No, I moved from Morris Street to 1068 Marble Street.

D: Was that in the river bend area?

C: Right down where the bridge goes over.

D: Down around Westlake?

C: When you go over the bridge and you go up Federal Street and over the freeway, that is where Marble Street is.

D: How long did you live there.

C: I lived on Marble Street for about a year and a half.

D: What do you remember about Youngstown during this time?

C: Businesses were going all the way from Spring Common to Basin Street.

D: Did you go into Youngstown often in the late 1920s?

C: I came through there every day from work. That is where I did all my business and everything.

D: Do you remember some of the businesses or the big stores that you often went to regularly?

C: Sure, I remember Strauss', McKelvey's, Woolworth's, McCrorey's, Kresky's.

D: Do you remember how many Woolworth's they had in Youngstown?

C: They had about four or five scattered around.

D: Did both black and white go there?

C: We had a lot of trouble getting into a top hotel like the Hotel Ohio at the time.

D: Do you mean if you were black you had a lot of trouble?

C: Yes. At the time when I came you had to be recommended by somebody. I remember very good that Ben Davis came here and spoke. He was brought here by the Republican Party to speak here. He didn't have any trouble getting in there because he was vouched for.

D: I you were a black person without any references you couldn't get in there?

C: That's right. That included Tod House, Pick-Ohio Hotel, and the Youngstown Hotel. Those were the top hotels here at that time.

D: How about theaters? I have heard a lot that you had to sit in certain sections of the

theaters. Do you remember anything about that if you went to a movie theater?

C: I don't remember anything about that, not here. No way could you go in the South. Sometimes you would go into these places and people would give you a snow.

D: How about some of the places where you went for recreation? Did you go to any of the theaters or ballrooms around Youngstown?

C: Idora Park and Chandler Park. There was another one, too.

D: How about the one up on Elm where the university is?

C: I don't know. I never went there. I know about Idora Park.

D: Was it black and white at these big ballrooms?

C: It was more or less segregated at that time.

D: How about these areas that you lived in? Were they mixed ethnic groups in the neighborhoods?

C: Oh yes, there were people from Eastern Europe and everywhere.

D: When you first came up to Youngstown, was there a specific area of Youngstown that was considered a black area, or was it kind of all mixed?

C: It was all mixed area.

D: In other words, there was no one part of town where mainly just blacks lived?

C: The working people here had no segregation. In fact, I have been living next door to a white person ever since I have been in Youngstown. They had nothing like what you call a black belt here.

D: So a black steel worker and a white Slovak steel worker would live in the same neighborhood?

C: Yes.

D: What happened after you left Youngstown Sheet & Tube?

C: I went to Republic and worked there for about three months, but I got into the same trouble there that I had gotten into at Sheet & Tube. It was a thing with a foreman.

D: You got in trouble with a foreman?

C: That's right. The superintendent knew about what happened, so he worked me at Brier Hill.

D: Was that U.S. Steel?

C: Sheet & Tube.

D: How long did you work there?

C: Seven years, until 1935.

D: What do you remember now about the Brier Hill plant?

C: It was one of the best jobs I ever had in my life.

D: What were the conditions like?

C: The working conditions and the supervision were the best.

D: How about pay?

C: The pay was good. You got a bonus.

D: What were the work hours?

C: Regular eight hours and then you got double, but you didn't get any overtime pay.

D: Of course, unions weren't strong in any of these steel foundries.

C: We had some yellow dog contract or something that represented us. It was a company where you would pay a nickel or a dime and then you would get represented. You elected your own representative. We called it a yellow dog contract.

D: Were these yellow dog unions really just company unions?

C: That is what the majority of them were. In 1935 we organized at Brier Hill the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin in North America.

D: That was organized here in Youngstown?

C: It was organized here in 1933. That was after the NRA, National Recovery Act.

That had a rider that would allow men to organize without being discriminated against or penalized by supervision.

D: So the NRA paved the way for the union to organize?

C: Yes.

D: At Brier Hill, did everybody work together or did it seem like each group had one job?

C: Everybody worked together, yes. Of course, sometimes they got the best jobs on the list.

D: Who did?

C: The white workers.

D: What do you mean by that? Give me an example of a good job in a foundry.

C: I wasn't worried too much about the foundry, but I mean in the town with rollers, heaters, and welders. The whites had the best jobs.

D: How about their pay?

C: It was equal, yes. But see, you didn't get promoted. When the time came for promotion, they would run around you. Now the union got in there and cut that stuff out. When United Steel Workers of America became a predominating factor in the plant, they cut that out, and you were promoted by two factors--seniority and ability to do the job. The boss didn't go around and pick out somebody and bring him a cigar or something. They cut that stuff out.

D: Were you still living on Marble Street?

C: No, I was living on the East Side at the time, on Rose Street.

D: Was that a house?

C: Yes. I lived at 888 Rose Street and then I moved to 845 Rose Street.

D: Who were you living with?

C: My wife. I got married in 1927.

D: Were you able to rent your own house?

C: Yes.

D: What was typical rent for a house in Youngstown?

C: About $35 or $40 plus utilities.

D: Did you ever think about buying your own home during this time?

C: Yes.

D: About what did it cost to buy a home?

C: When the Depression came, probably the bottom dropped out of the real estate business. You got a house cheap right after the Depression. After the war came, though, real estate boomed again. The economy rose and the real estate rose.

D: So, during the Depression, are we talking about $3,000 for a house?

C: Something like that, yes. . . . If you had the money. That was the trouble, you didn't have the money.

D: Was Rose Street an ethnically mixed area?

C: Yes, it was an ethnically mixed area.

D: What occurred in 1935 with Brier Hill works?

C: The strip mill took over the sheet mill. They could run it so much faster and make more stuff at a bigger profit. They sat on the hand at the sheet mill at that time, so I hit the street.

D: You hit the street during the middle of the Depression?

C: In 1935 the Depression had let up some.

D: What do you remember about the Depression in Youngstown? You already mentioned the property values dropping, but what about soup lines and things like that?

C: They had plenty of them here. It looked like the Hindenburg line up on Wirt Street and other places here.

D: Who sponsored those soup lines? Was it the city or a church?

C: The government, I guess.

D: Did you know anybody who got any of those WPA [Works Progress Administration] jobs or CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] jobs?

C: I never got any WPA jobs because when the WPA came in and started here in 1933, my job was going good.

D: What about when Brier Hill shut down.

C: That's when it hit me. At the time Sheet & Tube had a rule. They had a commissary. They would advance their workers from their coke works down there from the commissary.

D: So in a way, the company tried to take care of you a little bit.

C: They did. Sheet & Tube did, but the others--U.S. Steel and them--laid you off, you were out of luck. The difference in it is that we lost in the long run because when they let you have that stuff, you had to pay them, they took that out first.

D: You always end up paying the company.

C: Yes, sure.

D: What were some of the things you did to keep going when you hit the street?

C: With my experience at Republic, I got a job at Republic Rubber as a clean-up man. I worked that about a month. I got petty cash. Then I got called back to Republic, but in the meantime I got called back to Sheet & Tube, too.

D: You weren't laid off from Sheet & Tube for two or three years like some other people?

C: Oh, no.

D: Did you work pretty steady then through the late 1930s and into World War II?

C: All the way through. I only drew one week of unemployment compensation from 1936 up until I retired in 1969.

D: So you got through the Depression a lot luckier than a lot of people?

C: I was working, but the company would take their money out first while I was back renting and stuff like that.

D: Had you moved to Covington Street by now?

C: I had moved to Covington Street, bout this house, moved in here in the May of 1937.

D: Do you remember how much you paid for this house originally?

C: To tell you the truth, I think I paid $700 for it.

D: What type of area was it?

C: The whole place was working people. That store right across the street there was operated by a Greek fellow.

D: So, again, we are talking about an ethnically mixed area.

C: Yes. Greeks, Croatians, Slovaks, Italians, everything was here.

D: Were many of them steel workers?

C: Most of them were steel workers. There were a couple of businessmen, but the rest of them were steel workers.

D: How about the area two or three blocks away, the old Westlake crossing area, where the projects are now? What do remember about that?

C: It was mixed like here.

D: How about the type of housing there on Wirt Street?

C: They had more of those beat up shacks there from Griffith Street back to the corner in that angle there where the projects are now. It was like a triangle. It narrowed out where Federal and Madison run together and made a triangle. Then they crossed over to where the freeway is now and built them up further.

D: Those were more or less shacks?

C: Yes, run-down shacks. They were owned by the original Westlake pioneer family. A majority of that property was owned by the Westlakes, and there was also Westlake Avenue.

D: There was originally a family called Westlake?

C: Yes, that is why they called it Westlake's Crossing. The Wicks and the Arms and the Tods and the Westlakes and the Shehys and the Wilsons were all original families here. They more or less built Youngstown.

D: Do you think that the slums and shacks were on property owned by the Westlake family?

C: Yes.

D: You mentioned before that the people who lived in those slums and shacks were mixed?

C: That's right.

D: How about the area across the street, Federal Street?

C: Federal Street was all mixed down there on the south side of Federal Street coming into town.

D: That's the area they called the Monkey's Nest, right?

C: Yes. That was all mixed in there. That was the river bend area.

D: From what you can remember, into the 1930s it wasn't an all black are, it was mixed?

C: No, it wasn't an all black area. A whole lot of times a fellow got the money and they got better jobs. They got to moving out and buying.

D: What do you remember about the big steel strike of 1937? Were you active in it at all?

C: Yes, I was active in it. I belonged to [union local] 1418 at that time.

D: What exact union did you belong to in 1937? Was it the U.S. Steel Workers?

C: It was SWOC, Steel Workers Organized Committee. It came under the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. The CIO at the time, was the Committee of Industrial Organizations instead of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. They changed the name of it. They kept the same initials, but they changed the name of it.

D: What were the root caused of that strike? Was it union?

C: U.S. Steel signed a contract to keep the ball rolling. Sharon Steel signed a contract, too.

D: That was a union contract.

C: Yes. Sheet & Tube and Republic wouldn't [sign one]. That is why we had the strike in 1937. Tom Garzba was the president of the Republic Steel Corporation. Frank Purnell was the president of Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company.

D: How long did the strike last?

C: It lasted about five or six weeks.

D: Do you remember when they brought in the state police?

C: They brought in the National Guard here.

D: What was the general feeling in Youngstown? Were most working people supportive of the strike?

C: Yes, but they didn't know the benefits of unions at that time. Some of them didn't want to strike.

D: How about you personally, were you in favor of unions?

C: I have always favored unions. I would organize anything. If I was a criminal, I would be for organized crime. Organized anything is better than unorganized.

D: How exactly did the unions go about organizing people at places like Republic where the company was trying to keep the union out?

C: They were writing it up on the sly.

D: What exactly does that mean?

C: I have a card for you to sign, then you pay me your dues. I take your dues to the union hall to give it to the treasurer.

D: It didn't come right out of the paycheck?

C: No. If you had a contract then the company deducted it out.

D: Did you go around and get a hold of workers behind the foreman's back?

C: That's right. We would go the houses sometimes.

D: When did this situation improve? When did Republic and Sheet & Tube finally give in?

C: Sheet & Tube never got a contract form 1937 until 1942. They gave a contract in 1942 because after the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor and they had a lot of work. They said that any company that didn't sign under the Wagner Act wouldn't get anything [government contracts] if they didn't allow union labor.

D: Once the federal government said you either sing you don't get any federal contracts, Republic came around?

C: They came around so fast we thought the world was going to end.

D: You mentioned that in the late 1930s and early 1940s was about the time they first began clearing out and putting in the projects over here at Westlake.

C: That's right. They started working on them in 1939 and 1940.

D: Can you remember the construction?

C: I can remember that good. I don't remember what construction company had the contract to build the projects, though.

D: Do you happen to know exactly what happened to some of the people who originally lived over there in those slums and shacks? Were they given aid to move someplace else?

C: You had to get out the best way you could. They gave you time to get out.

D: So you're not sure if they were given money by the Westlakes or by the city.

C: I wouldn't know about that. All I know is that they moved out of there.

D: How did you feel and some of the people around feel as residents about the fact that these projects were going in there?

C: We felt good about it because we were done with all that regular old slum stuff that was going on over there. When they put the government projects in here, they had restrictions, and they walked by them and lived by them. Now since they have gotten built, they have everything going on over there. It was a good thing.

D: Did you notice if whites had most of the construction jobs when it was being built?

C: Whites had the top jobs. To my knowledge, I didn't know but one black carpenter who worked in there.

D: How about common labor, like brick carriers?

C: With common labor, sure, they had blacks. I remember one black carpenter who worked in there. There may have been more, but the only one I knew was a fellow by the name of Mr. Gregory.

D: At the time they were building the Westlake project, they were also building the Covington School, right?

C: That's right.

D: Was it you understanding then, as a parent in that area, that they were building the Covington School mainly because the projects were being built?

C: No, Covington School was already here. It was an old, beat-up, dilapidated school. They just tore it out and built a new one.

D: Do you think they would have rebuilt the school if it hadn't been for the project?

C: Yes, they would have redone it. At that time you couldn't have these little first graders walking way across the street over there. They built them in this area here as an accommodation, that was what it was. I don't think there was any discrimination in that.

D: Do you think the main reason that they rebuilt the Covington School was because they knew a whole lot of people were going to be moving into the Westlake project?

C: We already had a whole lot of people in there then. In other words, they just tore it down and rebuilt it to give us a more modern facility. I don't think there was any discrimination in it. There could have been, but it was real hidden if there was.

D: What do you personally remember about the appearance of those projects as soon as they were finished in 1942.

C: Everything was spick and span. At that time they kept surveillance on it.

D: So as far as you were concerned as a homeowner a block or two away, you were glad to have them.

C: Yes. They were kept well and everything. They didn't allow a whole lot of these people in there. There are a whole lot of things going on in there now. It is a shame.

D: Did you remain in Youngstown during the war?

C: Yes, I got a deferred classification.

D: Did you continue to work at the mill during the war years?

C: Yes, until I retired.

D: Did you have to have any type of security check to work in the mill?

C: They finger printed you and took your picture.

D: How about labor conditions? Did the union try to cooperate with the company during the war years?

C: We got better working conditions all over. We had better bath houses and everything.

D: Did you get the feeling that or hear of the union and the company making a deal that there wouldn't be any strikes because there was a war on?

C: There wouldn't be any strikes anyway because of the very fact that we knew we were in an emergency and that we had a bad war on our hands. Everybody was willing to go ahead and work.

D: Were there any strikes in Youngstown in any of the plants during the war?

C: There were no strikes here. The first strike after 1937 was in 1946.

D: Getting back to Westlake, were you know people who lived in Westlake project during the first 10 or 12 years they were built?

C: Oh yes, I had two or three relatives who lived there.

D: What part of the projects did they live in?

C: They lived up and down Federal Street and up Griffith Street. There wasn't too much discrimination at that time.

D: You didn't notice the fact that south of Madison Avenue was a mainly black area?

C: There were a lot of blacks in the south, I will admit that. Our county chairman went

down and lived in the project there.

D: Who do you mean?

C: Don Hanni. A couple of police lived in the project here, too.

D: As the 1940s went along, especially after the war, did you notice if the projects began to change at all?

C: It relaxed. They relaxed in room regulations over there. A whole lot of things started to go on over there. When it started, you had to show a marriage certificate [to be allowed to move in].

D: When would you say the neighborhoods around Westlake changed, as far as being mixed?

C: After the war.

D: Why or how did that come about?

C: During the war you were making money hand over fist. You couldn't buy what you wanted, so the best thing that you could do was to save your money. [After the war] the whites commenced moving out to the suburbs. That was what happened. I had been living by the people next door to me for 40 years. They were Croatians. I think he was a child when he came here. The people over on this corner sold out and left here.

D: When?

C: I don't remember what year it was.

D: What street is that over there?

C: Scott Street. He ran the store here. He lived in the house right next to the store. They all moved out after the war. They got high enough on the pole to buy into the suburbs.

D: We aren't talking 10 or 20 years ago, this is going back 30 years ago into the 1959s?

C: Yes, that's right.

D: So, by the early 1950s, you began to see real changes in the Westlake projects.

C: Yes. By that I mean the restrictions at Westlake. The property was still being taken

care of, but the restrictions relaxed.

D: Did your cousins remain there or did they end up moving out?

C: They remained there. The majority of the people remained there until they got enough money to buy.

D: About when did that occur?

C: Around 1950 or something like that.

D: So whether you were white or black, if you lived in or around Westlake and had a good enough job, most of the people moved out and went off to own their own homes?

C: Yes, that's right.

D: Did you know any of the newer people that moved in in the late 1950s and started staying there?

C: I got to know quite of few of them.

D: Why did things change from families moving in for awhile and then moving out when they bought their own home to people moving in and just staying there?

C: When a man becomes more economically stable by getting promoted and drawing in more money, they buy property and move out. That is what happened.

D: What about the blacks that moved in later, weren't their jobs as good? Were things getting tougher for young blacks?

C: It wasn't getting any tougher. It [Westlake] became a haven for whole lot of people who were unemployed. A whole lot of retirees who didn't buy any homes moved in there. A whole lot of retirees live in there now.

D: Was this the case in the very beginning?

C: It was more or less built for that.

D: You already said that many people were moving out of the Westlake area, but what about the people that were moving in? Were they coming from other parts of Youngstown?

C: Yes, they were coming from other parts of Youngstown and buying property in here

at the time.

D: How about people coming in from outside of Youngstown after World War II? Were there still a lot of blacks coming up from the South?

C: Oh yes, there were a lot of blacks coming up from down there. Of course, there were plenty of jobs up here. The railroad was all working good, and then there was a lot of construction going on. There were plenty of jobs here, that's all there was to it.

D: How about even during the war, were there still a lot of blacks coming up because the mills had to supply the army?

C: Oh yes, a lot of them were coming up.

D: Even from the beginning of the war, did you notice a significant expansion of the black community in Youngstown? Were there many more blacks in 1950 as there had been in, say, 1940?

C: Oh yes, the population was improving.

D: Many of them, of course, had come from the South to get the jobs.

C: Yes.

D: You said you began to notice Westlake wasn't being kept up as well as when it started.

C: A whole lot of stuff was going on. I won't name it, but a whole lot of stuff was going on.

D: Did you ever give any thought to moving?

C: No, I haven't given a thought about moving out of here unless they came through here and took the place because I'm too old. I'm 81.

D: How about some of your neighbors, did they ever mention to you that the reason they were moving out was because the Westlake project no longer seemed like a nice place to live?

C: All of them are still here, at least those who haven't died. When they died out, the children got the property.

D: You make it sound like a lot of the original families in one way or another kept the property here on Covington Street.

C: Yes, they did. Some of them who didn't have any children. There are three of four houses down there when families have bought the houses. Some of them the children didn't take care of and they went to pot.

D: What effect did the building of the Madison Avenue expressway in the mid-1960s have on this area.

C: They tore up the river bend area. It knocked us out of the box politically.

D: This urban development, you said this was during the [Mayor Anthony] Flask administration?

C: Yep, urban development. They tore all of the houses out of there and moved everybody out, bought them out.

D: Could you tell me some of those streets down in the river bend area again so we know exactly where we are talking about?

C: Crescent Street, Hazelwood Street, St. Claire Avenue, Bridge Street, and Thurman Street.

D: What is there now?

C: Industry, what little bit there is. Some of them went under, but that was what it was. It was industry all the way up and down Rayen Avenue on both sides.

D: They started tearing those homes down in the 1950s would you say?

C: Something like that. I don't remember just when it was.

D: Were most of the people living in that area black?

C: The majority of them were. A whole lot of whites had already moved out.

D: Where did the blacks that got displaced go?

C: Some of them went on the South Side, and some of them went into the projects. If they weren't able to buy, they went into the projects.

D: The South Side was still more of a mixed area even into the 1950s, right?

C: Yes.

D: Why did they go to the South Side?

C: It was probably a little cheaper on the South Side than it was on the North Side at that time. I don't know why. I knew a fellow who bought a house over there. He paid $3,400 for a house over there, and another guy I knew wanted $6,000 for house up here that wasn't as good.

D: On the North Side?

C: Yes.

D: Do you know people who live in Westlake now?

C: Oh, yes. I know quite a few of them over there.

D: Tell me a little about some of them. Have they lived there a long time?

C: Yes, they've lived there a long time. They are old retirees.

D: Did they move into Westlake after they had already retired?

C: Some of them did and some of them didn't. Some of them were already there when they were there. If a man didn't have a wife, he would live in there. The lady who used to live next door lives in Westlake Terrace now.

D: Do you think if they had more money they would probably move out?

C: Probably so, yes.

D: In other words, they don't view Westlake as a nice place to live now.

C: There is so much stuff going on over there.

D: How about places like along Madison or Lexington, would you say that a lot of the original whites stayed or did they move out?

C: A whole lot of them moved out from up there.

D: Did blacks take their place?

C: Yes, they bought their houses.

D: Would you say that it unusual in this general area for people to actually own their homes?

C: Most everybody owns their home up and down here. Very few people rent.

D: So, really the only renters around here are the people at Westlake.

C: More or less, that's right.

D: Just to kind of close, you briefly mentioned the Madison Avenue Expressway going in. What did that do to property values?

C: I was for it going in. It would get you where you were going quicker. When we found out if would devalue the property and they wanted to make this an industrial area, we fought it.

D: What do you mean?

C: The point is that this is an industrial area. Industry is number one and residential is number two.

D: They wanted to rezone this area?

C: Yes, that's right.

D: Did they manage to do that?

C: No, we fought it. We had a petition. By letting the houses run down around here, it might as well be an industrial area.

D: Did the city call the homeowners together and have a talk with you about the expressway?

C: Yes.

D: You said that you favored the expressway?

C: I favored it, yes. It didn't affect me at all. I favored it because you could get where you were going much quicker. You didn't have all of these traffic tie-ups and stuff.

D: What did your neighbors think?

C: They thought it was good. You could be where you were going in ten minutes and back on the freeway. That was more convenient for the traffic. It might have affected a man who owned property in there because he would have to give up his property.

D: I would like to thank you for doing this interview, Mr.Carter.

C: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW