

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown, Westlake Terrace

Personal Experience

O.H. 899

MAGDALEN ANN (LANEY) KRICHBAUM

Interviewed

by

Evelyn Mangie

on

November 14, 1985

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INTERVIEWEE: MAGDALEN ANN (LANEY) KRICHBAUM

INTERVIEWER: Evelyn Mangie

SUBJECT: Downtown, Job, Westlake, War

DATE: November 14, 1985

M: This is an interview with Laney Krichbaum for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Youngstown, Westlake Terrace project, by Evelyn Mangie, on November 14, 1985, at 753 Mineral Springs, at 3:15 p.m.

To start off with, tell me about yourself. Were you born in Youngstown?

K: Yes, I have lived here all of my life.

M: Do you remember your parents?

K: My mother. My dad died when I was about three or four.

M: Where in Youngstown did you live?

K: On the Eastside. I graduated from East High School.

M: Do you remember the street where you grew up?

K: We lived in the area by Truscon, on Springdale and Bentley, primarily. Then, we lived on Shehy for about a year. Then, we moved to the Westlake Terrace [during] my senior year in high school.

M: You lived there with your parents--mother?

K: Yes, with my mother and my brother.

M: Before we get that far, tell me more about growing up. What was Youngstown like?

K: I don't know. We had a good time.

M: Doing what?

K: We used to play outside most of the time. We played a lot of games and things like that with the kids in the neighborhood. We had a good time.

We spent a lot of time at the Truscon Playground during most of our summers, because they had sort of a program. They had swing sets and stuff like that. Then, they had things in the club house, as we called it. That was where they taught us basket weaving. We did a lot of things. Then, we were live checkers.

M: Live checkers?

K: Yes. They had a great big enormous checker board that they had drawn with markers on the tennis court. It was somewhere where there was a lot of room. They had drawn the entire thing. The regulars from the playground wore hats. I guess the girls wore red and the guys wore black. Two men were playing checkers, and they had these fishing poles with a streamer hanging down. We had to squat on the squares. They would take the pole and dangle it in front of our faces, so that we knew we were to jump next. Then, they would show us which block to move into. Then when we jumped, we had to leap-frog over the others. As we were disqualified, we were sent out. When the kings were crowned, they had crowns put on them. We had our picture in the paper on that one. We did a few times. That was during the Depression.

M: That was organized by the staff at Truscon Playground.

K: Yes. Mr. Ellis was the director of the playground. He was a teacher at Rayen during the school year; and during the summer months, he supervised the playground.

M: That was nice to have there.

K: Yes.

M: What about Youngstown itself? Did you go downtown much?

K: Sure, I went to school at St. Joseph's on Wick Avenue. I went there everyday. We rode the bus in the morning; and then, we always walked home from school.

M: Through downtown?

- K: No. We lived by Truscon. We went straight down Wick and down Madison. The streetcar tracks had a little passageway there, where we would cut over. We didn't go all the way down Madison. We didn't go all the way down to Albert Street. We cut down through this part, where the streetcar used to go through, that went out to the Sharon Line. We cut through there and went on home.
- M: Was St. Joseph's pretty much the same as it is now?
- K: They tore it down. The school is gone.
- M: The school is gone.
- K: This is the school that was up on Wick Avenue across from the library. Now, the church is the Newman Center. There was the church and then the convent and the rectory; and then, [there was] the school.
- M: Do you remember when they tore it down?
- K: No.
- M: I don't remember it at all.
- K: Our kids went there for CCD, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. I know it has been gone for awhile.
- M: St. Joseph's is still there, the church.
- K: Yes, but now, it is the Newman Center.
- M: Yes, they haven't really changed it all that much, though, have they?
- K: I haven't been in it since they have changed it.
- M: I have seen pictures of it. It used to have a tower, the steeple in the front, and that is gone. Do you remember that?
- K: I don't think I paid that much attention. I really don't think so.
- M: Somebody told me it burned. You don't remember anything.
- K: St. Joseph's?
- M: No, just the tower.

K: Oh, I think the tower did, yes; but I don't remember that, because I was pretty young at the time. I don't remember that.

M: It has been gone awhile.

K: Yes.

M: How about downtown? Was it much different than it is now?

K: Sure, now it is dead.

M: I have had people tell me that it was so full of people.

K: Certainly. Anywhere you went, you traveled on the buses. We never had a car, because there was just my mom and my younger brother and me. Those buses used to run regularly, like every fifteen minutes. If you would miss one, you would wait fifteen minutes or so. The next one would be coming by. I think everybody rode the buses in those days. Very few people we knew had cars. You didn't have to worry too much about parking. Everybody would hop on a bus and go downtown. When you were downtown, you would hop on a bus and go back home. It was rather convenient. There were a lot of stores.

M: Which ones?

K: I remember, they had a lot of specialty dress shops on West Federal.

M: Like Livingston's?

K: Yes.

M: Can you remember some others?

K: I can't remember the names of them, right off the bat. They kept changing through the years, too.

M: The names?

K: Yes, the stores kept changing. We used to go to Patrakos after all of the football games. That was for sodas and sundaes, and things like that.

M: Where was that?

K: A few doors down from Stone's Grill. Stone's was on the corner of West Federal and Hazel Street. That was where

they served drinks. The high school kids went down a couple of doors. It would be across the street from Woolworth's, sort of diagonally heading up towards the Home Savings & Loan. It was the block between Phelps and Hazel. Everybody used to go to Petrakos. Then, they had Kress' right next door. Peggy Ann's was on the corner. Then, we also went to the Friedman's, which was next to the Palace Theater. That was another little ice cream place. The Palace is long gone.

M: Friedman's is long gone.

K: I remember going to the Strand Theater, which is where the Realty Building was in that area. That would be in the southeast corner of the square.

M: What was that, just movies?

K: Yes, just movies.

M: You don't remember vaudeville or anything like that?

K: Not too much. I just remember going to the Palace to see all the big name bands.

M: Like who?

K: Like Frank Sinatra with Tommy Dorsey and Glen Gray, Vaughan Monroe, Sammy Kaye, and Horace Heidt. We talked with him afterwards one time. Then, they would come up to Nu-Elms, too. That was on Elm Street. We would go there.

M: Dancing?

K: Yes.

M: How many performances did he do?

K: They showed a movie, and then, the band would be on.

M: A movie and a performance.

K: Yes, they would show the movie, and then, he would be on again.

M: With Tommy Dorsey, of course.

K: Yes. They would have the stage show. You could go and sit all day for one admission price. That was how we

got to be in the front row all the time.

M: Do you remember what prompted the move to Westlake?

K: No, not really. We lived with my sister and her husband and her three kids. We were living on Shehy at the time. My brother-in-law wanted to buy a home. He and my mother shared the rent. We had lived with them for quite awhile. Mother didn't especially think it was a good idea to buy a home. She didn't think that was a good idea to buy a home together. Renting was okay, but not buying. I guess that's when she. . . . I really didn't pay that much attention.

M: No, you were a senior in high school.

K: I was a junior at the time.

M: Do you remember what year that was?

K: In 1940.

M: When they were brand new?

K: I think so, yes. Ours hadn't been lived in that I know of. No, I think they were new.

M: They were built in 1939. The very first tenants moved in 1939.

K: We moved in 1940.

M: Do you remember the construction at all?

K: The only thing I remember is that I fell down the steps, and it didn't hurt. They kind of echoed. They were metal or something. That is my one vivid memory; it didn't hurt.

M: You must have just been lucky with the way you fell.

K: Maybe. I don't know.

M: I meant when they were under construction. You don't remember anything.

K: No, I didn't pay any attention. We lived on the East-side. We didn't have any car. I never saw the place until we moved in.

M: At one point, Eleanor Roosevelt came just before they opened. They played that up in the newspaper. Do you remember that at all?

K: No. I don't ever remember seeing Eleanor.

M: She came for more than one thing, but she did go to Westlake.

K: I remember one time, FDR, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, came. He went over this Elephant Bridge at the lower part of Federal Street. It goes over to Poland Avenue. I remember standing on that bridge. I was in high school at that time. We were allowed to leave classes, so that we could go down and see him. I remember seeing him riding past in a convertible.

M: You went down to see FDR. Was that exciting?

K: Sure, yes. He was president.

M: He was president already at the time.

K: I think he was.

M: Do you remember why he came to Youngstown?

K: I don't remember.

M: Did he just drive through downtown?

K: He was driving over that bridge. I don't know if he was going to see the steel mills. In fact, I don't even remember if he was going or coming. All I remember is standing on that bridge, which they called the Elephant Bridge, and watching him go by. That is a very faint recollection. I don't remember ever seeing Eleanor or hearing anything about her.

M: Was that before the war?

K: Yes. I graduated in June of 1941.

M: You don't remember then, any of the details about moving into Westlake, like how your mother got onto them.

K: No, I don't even remember how we got there, who moved us, or anything. All I remember is that I didn't want to go. I probably blotted that out.



- M: Was there any particular reason why you didn't want to go?
- K: We had lived on the Eastside. It was my senior year, and I wanted to finish at East High.
- M: Did you have to change schools?
- K: No, because it was my senior year, they let me finish there. My brother had to go to Rayen. All my friends were at East High. That was the reason I really didn't want to move.
- M: How did you get back over there, on a bus?
- K: Yes, everyday.
- M: Tell me some more about Westlake. You and your brother lived there with your mother.
- K: Yes. Then, my brother went to the service, so my mother and I were sort of by ourselves there.
- M: Do you remember your unit number at Westlake?
- K: It was 51 Wirt. I don't remember the apartment number. I do remember the infamous Vince DeNiro, who lived next door to us. He sold vegetables on a truck, or his dad did.
- M: Did you know the family?
- K: The mother and younger kids we got to know, but Vince was hardly ever around. Mike and Louie, I think, were the younger ones. Their mother was the sister of Ray Cataline, who was in my class at East High. This is why I remember that part; I knew Ray. The mother said that was her younger brother. We really didn't associate with them too much. We just would get out and talk, and spend some time in the yard, and stuff like that.
- M: Do you remember some of the other neighbors?
- K: Mrs. Kovach was Mom's buddy. She had a couple of kids. I think she had a husband, too, and Johnny Ingram, who was in the Navy. He had two or three sisters. I remember one was named Julie. She was around my age. Their mother was a widow, too. In fact, there were a lot of widows in that project. There was also a lady

named Mrs. Gochenor. Most of these women were my mother's friends. Mrs. Dudai lived downstairs. We had an upstairs apartment.

M: You didn't have both floors.

K: No, we were upstairs. The people downstairs had little kids, so maybe that was why. We were practically adults. I don't know if that was the reasoning. I don't know why we got the upstairs.

M: Was it a two bedroom unit or a three bedroom?

K: Two, just the two bedrooms.

M: Just a two bedroom unit. You and your brother had to share a bedroom.

K: No, mother and I shared. My brother always had his own room. Then, we just had the living room and the kitchen, and the two bedrooms.

M: Do you remember the apartment? Was it nice?

K: I didn't like it.

M: Just because it wasn't where you wanted to be?

K: As I said, I was really upset because I wanted to be living on the Eastside with all of my friends. Anytime I could manage, I would go back to the Eastside.

M: How about your mother? Did she like it?

K: I suppose she did, because she had a lot of friends. All of these ladies would get together, and they would sit out on the porch--if you could call it a porch. It was just a stone slab, wide enough for the two doors because the one door went to the lower apartment and the other door went to our apartment. There was just enough room to encompass the two doors, and then, they had the iron railing around it and the cement steps. That was where they would sit, on the steps. I don't remember anybody ever having lawn chairs or stuff like that, but they did have grass. They had planted the grass, and that looked kind of nice.

M: Was that taken care of by the people who took care of it, or did your mother have to take care of the yard?

K: I don't think my mother ever had to; no, I don't think so. As I said, they had a lot of windows, and they would not have anyplace to store the lawn mower.

M: Do you remember maintenance?

K: I don't even remember the laundry. I don't even remember how we did that. As I said, I travelled on the bus all the time, and I do remember, from West Federal to Madison, the lower part was where they had all of the black people. Then, the upper part was where all of the white people lived. Anytime you went, you had to go past the Black area to get to the bus stop.

M: Were people afraid to do that?

K: I was robbed one night. I was mugged.

M: Really?

K: Yes. I was coming home from the YWCA, Young Women's Christian Association, and I had high heels. I heard someone coming up behind me. I had a bag in my arms, and my purse was tucked under my arm. I heard someone coming up, so I turned around to say hello. About that time, I felt him push my back, and he pulled my purse and ran like the dickens. By the time I got turned around. . . . It was a young Black fellow. I had the darn high heels on, so I couldn't chase him. I stood there, and I yelled. Of course, he kept running. When I got home--it was near home. It wasn't that far. When I got home, I called the police. They came and drove around and around and around the project, and never once got out of the car and looked. I showed them exactly where the kid had gone in between the buildings. They never did go check.

M: Was it daytime?

K: No, it was dusk. It was in the fall. There wasn't snow on the ground or anything.

M: That's too bad.

K: Yes.

M: We have interviewed some people, who said that one of the nice things about it was that you didn't have to lock your doors.

K: No. I wasn't ever afraid. Even after that happened, I wasn't afraid.

M: Just angry.

K: I was furious. I really was. That upset me. I don't even remember how much money was in there, but they never found anything.

M: That laundry was a really unique set-up. They had several of them under the buildings. You don't remember that at all?

K: I don't remember the laundry. Mother must have done it all the time.

M: Yes, she probably did.

K: No, I don't remember anything about that.

M: You graduated while you were at Westlake.

K: Yes.

M: Where was your first job?

K: Sheet & Tube.

M: Doing what?

K: Teletype in the Stambaugh building downtown.

M: How long did you have that?

K: Five years, until I got married. I had to quit, because they did not retain married women. That was how they did it.

M: You worked all during the war.

K: Yes.

M: There were a lot of jobs for women during the war.

K: Yes, but it never occurred to me to go out and look for one that paid better.

M: Were you still living at Westlake when you were married?

- K: No, we had moved over to Albert Street during the war years.
- M: Why did you move?
- K: I wanted to get back on the Eastside.
- M: You talked your mother into going back.
- K: I don't remember if mother wanted to, but I know I wanted to. I didn't especially want to move to Albert Street, but she had this house picked out. I didn't want to live on a main street. I preferred something a little more secluded, not too much traffic.
- M: How many years in all did you live at Westlake?
- K: I don't know. I know I lived there for my senior year. I don't remember when we moved. I don't even remember the season. I know we lived there while I was working.
- M: Were you living there at the end of the war, or had you already moved?
- K: No, at the end of the war, we were on Albert Street. We had been on Albert Street while I was still working for a couple of years anyhow. I remember having pajama parties over on Albert Street, so we must have. . . . I don't remember having any over at Westlake, so maybe I was over there longer. Maybe it was two years or maybe three. It seems like we spent a couple of summers there.
- H: Did you have to go to the grocery store or something for your mother?
- K: There was a grocery store right on the corner.
- M: What was the name of that grocery store? Do you remember?
- K: No. It was right on the corner of Wirt Street and West Federal. We would stand there waiting for the bus in the mornings. I don't remember the name of it, no.
- M: Was it a supermarket or anything like that or just a corner grocery store?
- K: Corner grocery.
- M: Did he have charges?

- K: I don't know that either. I didn't do that much shopping.
- M: Do you remember your mother complaining at all? Do you remember her attitude, like if she liked it [shopping] there, or if she didn't like it there?
- K: As I said, she met these women, and they got to be friends.
- M: Did they stay friends after you left?
- K: Yes. In fact, I remember visiting Mrs. Kovach a few times.
- M: She moved, too.
- K: Everybody moved, sure. Eventually, everybody left there. We contacted most of the them. DeNiro's moved to the Eastside, around Lincoln Park Drive. Kovachs moved over to the Northside because they had been from the Northside originally. I don't know what happened to Ingram's. There was another one, but I don't remember his name. He was a minister.
- M: I have heard that Madison Avenue was called the Mason-Dixon Line. Did you ever hear the term?
- K: No. Why, because of the division?
- M: Yes, with the Black on one side and White on the other.
- K: No, that was pretty standard. Everybody seemed to accept that. No one questioned it. There wasn't any fuss made about that at all. We would walk right past there and never think anything of it. I remember walking into town a few times from there and walking home at night from town, and I never had to worry about anything.
- M: There are a whole lot of churches right around Westlake. You continued to stay at St. Joseph's?
- K: Yes.
- M: Was it because it wasn't too far?
- K: It was our church, and we went to our church.
- M: All of these people who lived around you just continued with their own churches. Do you remember people going

to the ones nearby?

K: I don't know where anyone went to church.

M: Where did you go when you and your husband went out?

K: We spent a lot of time down at the Youngstown Hotel and at the Shamrock on Market Street, across from South High School there.

M: What was at the hotel, dancing?

K: Yes, dancing at both places, and the Ohio Hotel. We did like to dance.

M: Did they have bands, or was it a juke box?

K: At the Shamrock, they had an organist. The Youngstown Hotel had a band or a jukebox. I think some nights, there was a band, and sometimes, there was a jukebox. The Ohio Hotel had mostly a band. We would stop in there. As we got older, we went to Stone's Grill instead of Petrakos, but then, we still went back to Petrakos quite a bit. The Brass Rail had excellent coffee.

M: Jay's Hot Dogs?

K: Yes, you always topped off an evening with Jay's Hot Dogs.

M: After you and your husband were married, where did you live?

K: On Madison Avenue. My brother and his wife owned this home.

M: This is not near Westlake?

K: No, this is down by Wick Avenue. It was right next to the Ohio Autobody. There were two homes up front on Madison and this one in the back. There was a very narrow driveway between the two up front. We rented the upstairs apartment in the back home. One day, they tore down the best house of the bunch.

M: They tore it down.

K: They tore it down for widening Madison Avenue or something. They put that island in there. They tore down that beautiful home and left the other two, and the

Other two weren't half as nice as the one they tore down. They built this retaining stone wall. Then, you couldn't see when you tried to get out of that drive. People came straight down Madison. It was dumb engineering. It really was. You took a chance on your life going down that drive because you went against traffic. The drive hits right into the oncoming traffic. If you didn't have someone to run up to the corner to check on the traffic, you are really taking your life in your hands. We lived there five years.

Then, Earl's mother worked for a rental agency, some kind of federal program, the rent control program. She heard of a home that was for rent in Brownlee Woods. We moved there because we were expecting our third child. We figured it was time to move out of that apartment. We lived there a couple of years, two or three. Then, we moved up to Dewey, and we stayed there for eight years. Then, we moved here, and we have been here ever since.

M: Since your husband's mother was working for federal housing, did she have anything to do with Westlake?

K: No.

M: Have we left out anything? Is there anything that you can think of that you would like to add?

K: I don't think so.

M: I want to thank you very much. You can't think of anything we have missed, anything that you might like to add?

K: I can't think of anything, not right off the bat.

END OF INTERVIEW