

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Farrell Race Relations in 1960's

Personal Experience

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FLORENCE D. KROKOSKI

Interviewed

by

Ronald J. Rice

on

November 17, 1980

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: FLORENCE D. KROKOSKI

INTERVIEWER: Ronald J. Rice

SUBJECT: Farrell, racial tension, education

DATE: November 17, 1980

R: This is an interview with Mrs. Florence Krokoski for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project, on the racial tensions in Farrell during the 1960's, by Ronald J. Rice, at 507 New Castle Road, Farrell, Pennsylvania, at 8:15 p.m. on November 7, 1980.

Okay, Mrs. Krokoski, could we begin with you telling me a little bit about what your childhood was like and what you remember about your parents and family.

K: Alright, I was born and raised in the city of Farrell. I have lived here fifty-four years. The early part of my childhood was spent at 1209 Naegly Street in Farrell. We lived in what was considered the Hill, but at that time I never knew it. No one ever told me it was the Hill. It was only later when we went to school that we found these things out.

R: It's the Hill down along. . .

K: The Hill was up here.

R: Up here?

K: Yes, we lived up on Naegly. That was near the Echo's Bowling. Of course, it was the better part of town, more affluent. But we were never brought up that way. We weren't ever brought up to think that way because both of my parents had come over from the old country, from Poland. They worked for everything they got, and they taught us that you worked. If you worked, you

gained that then but you were supposed to figure this out, okay? Now my parents when they first came here did live down around Spearman Avenue my mother tells me.

R: They settled right in Farrell when they came here from Poland?

K: My father was already here when my mother came over from Poland. It was a fixed marriage, matchmaking.

R: Oh, yes?

K: Yes, this is it. She came here to marry him, oh I think she was seventeen, eighteen, somewhere around there. When they first settled, they settled down at the lower end of town. Now if you know anything about Farrell, there was a section that was Polish. There were a couple of streets that were Croation and a couple of Italian, okay? They settled with the Polish people, of course. They lived there quite a few years. Then my father went to Flint, Michigan to work in the car factories there. He didn't like it; they came back, and they settled on Spearman Avenue in Farrell. At that time it was a beautiful street, mostly white, very few Negroes there. I don't think they lived there too long because from the way my mother talks, they moved up on Naegly Street. I think my sister Ann was born there, and she is sixty some odd years old. They moved up there quite soon after they came back to Farrell. Like I said, all our lives we knew black people, and we were always taught that if you look you will find something; yes, you are going to find it. I think this is a very good attitude to have because it has carried her through the years. When we first started school, it was up on the Echo's building, and there weren't any black children in my class. I never came into contact with them.

R: In grade school?

K: In grade school. That is one through sixth, right?

R: Yes.

K: Okay. Now I first came in contact with them when we went to junior high school. That would be the old junior high school down on Fruit Avenue in Farrell. As I said we were taught they are no different than you; they had feelings like you do. You don't hurt them or anything like that. I formed quite a few friendships

that have lasted through until today. I'm glad for it because I think I could talk to them a little easier. If they like you, they like you, and if they don't, as you know they are not going to. Nothing is going to help there.

R: Did you come from a large family?

K: I came from nine children.

R: Nine children.

K: Yes, there were nine of us, and I was the youngest of the girls. My older sisters never finished school even though they were very good scholars and everything. There just wasn't enough money to go around and times were hard. I guess you went out and got a job, right?

R: Yes.

K: I was fortunate because back at the time I came along and went to school I had two or three sisters who looked out after me. It mattered very, very much because they saw to it that I completed my education, and not only that but I had a brother, his name is Ted Bialko. He is a postman in Farrell right now. he was the kind of brother that when my mother said, "No," he said, "Yes." My father died when I was thirteen, fourteen, something like that. No, I would have had to have been fifteen because I was in the ninth grade in school. He helped raise the family. He brought us all up, and he saw to it that we did the right things. We respected our mother; we respected our home, and saw to it that we all went to school, were well dressed, well looked after. He was a very good brother. Then you looked after one another down the line. The youngest brother died when he was the age of nine. He had a tonsillectomy, and unfortunately the nurse that was called to look in on him didn't think that he was that bad. He died in my mother's arms. He was nine years old. That was about a year after my father had died.

Like I said, I like the people in Farrell. We had a change in 1955, I think when Westinghouse was on strike for a long time. I had an older brother John that lived in Hawaii. He wanted us to pull up roots and come settle there. He would find my husband a job.

R: In Hawaii?

K: In Hawaii, yes, he is buried there today. But as I said I like it here. We were born here; we were raised here. My husband was born and raised here, and you know everyone. You can walk down the street and I can remember families from way, way back when I was just a child. You see them today and you can recall all those memories. As far as tensions, sometimes I think they are played up a little bit too much. Do you know what I mean?

R: Yes.

K: I think if they would let the young generation, if the older people wouldn't always sit in and add their two cents, I think they put them on hold because there are a lot of us that have ideas from a long, long time ago, the no-no's, you know? We keep those; well, today it is a changing world, and you have got to go along with a lot of things that you normally wouldn't go with years and years ago.

R: You went to high school in?

K: Farrell.

R: Farrell, 1940?

K: I graduated in 1944.

R: You graduated in 1944?

K: Yes.

R: What do you remember about school? What stands out most in your mind about high school?

K: What do I think stands out most about high school? The wonderful education I got here. I wasn't a very healthy person so I took the business education course, and I had wonderful teachers. I had one in particular, Miss Cornelia Gagnia that sort of kept her eye out on me, and she got me a job in the school office.

R: Gagnia?

K: This was Gagnia, G-A-G-N-I-A, I believe is the way she spelled it, but she was our shorthand teacher at school. She got me a job in the school office.

R: After you got out of high school?

K: No, no, this was during school.

R: During school.

K: That something that was rather unheard of in those days. Because I would come in at 8:00 and work until 8:30. Then I was permitted to work from 3:20 until 4:00 or 4:15 in the afternoon, and I was paid for this. We have CETA today. I don't know what that was called in those days, but I had a job. I had a little bit of money in my pocket, and it was good; it was a good feeling. There were quite a few. Oh, my goodness, I had quite a few black kids in our class then. Only we didn't call them black; we called them Negroes or colored in that day. I suppose today it wouldn't go over so well.

R: When you graduated from high school in 1944, what did you do? Where did you go from there?

K: Well, I went to work as a personal secretary for Mr. Arthur Baldo at the Sharon Store; I was his private secretary.

R: Sharon Store?

K: Yes, that was Strouss's then.

R: Oh, okay, downtown Sharon?

K: Downtown Sharon. He was never there because he was always in New York on a shopping trip or something like that. It was a very, very lonely job. I will say that. At that time that I was there it became so boring that out of sheer boredom I got a store newspaper and started. That took up some of the time, but he was really a very wise, very wonderful person. After I was there about a year, a little more than a year because I think in October I decided that was enough of that. I went and I joined Personal Finance. Now it is known as Beneficial Finance Company. That job I really loved.

R: Where was that at, in Sharon too?

K: That was where Water Street is now. The Chrome building used to be there. This is many years ago. Right next to it on the left hand side as you were going up West Hill, it was located there. I worked there up until the time I got married. That would have been about almost ten years.

R: So you worked there until?

K: I was married in 1950. Six years, that was all the further that was.

R: Up until about 1950?

K: Well, no, 1951, because I left about a month before my baby was born, yes. I continued working after. I left work I think it was the end of November, and December 11, my daughter was born. She wasn't supposed to come until January, though, see.

R: So you got married in 1950?

K: 1950.

R: 1950.

K: And I married a boy from Farrell, a Polish boy. We were both going to the same parish. We were both Catholic and both raised here. That made it nice.

R: That is good. What was a typical day like for you then, say, when you were married?

K: When I was married or when I was at home?

R: When you working, say, when you had your job?

K: Okay, a typical day was getting up in the morning. My mother had my breakfast all ready for me, my clothes all ready for me. I want to tell you right now. I was very spoiled. My brothers always looked out after me. In fact, if I even went to a store and the store was just a block down, I had two brothers on either side of me, and you didn't stay out late after 9:00. At 9:00 I had to be home; that was a rule and that was something that I never questioned. It had to be, and I came. I enjoyed it because where we lived I could walk and I could go to what was called Number Nine Woods. I don't think you have ever heard of that.

R: No.

K: Well, some of the older people would. They had a ball field up there. There were woods. In fact Judy could probably tell you. It is up behind Eckel's and a little to the back. Now it is all filled with homes. It had a wooded area, oh maybe about a mile long.

R: Was that a park or something?

K: No, it was just woods, trees, flowers, bushes, shrubs, blackberry bushes, hazel nuts. When was the last time you saw a hazel nut bush, you know? Violets and everything, I used to go back in there and take my brothers with me. There was a little pond down there. We used to catch tadpoles and bring them home. Of course, they died, but I would bring the violets home. My father gave me a little plot in the backyard that I built a rock garden and I had it then. Of course, I neglected it later on. It went to pot too. It was a peaceful kind of life. The neighbors all knew you; they all took an interest in you. If you did anything wrong, they didn't wait to go tell my mother. They either got it then or was told then, you know? You always felt safe and secure; you always knew that someone was watching. We had a couple of teachers that have done a lot. You more or less minded your p's and q's.

R: Well, after you got married then, did you and your husband live in Farrell?

K: Yes, I went from up in the Hill clear down to the bottom on George Street.

R: George Street?

K: George Street, yes. His mother and he had an apartment there. We lived there about eighteen months I think until we built a home in Wheatland. We built a little national home down there. That was the first home that we ever owned.

R: In Wheatland?

K: In Wheatland on Fleetwood Court, right. We loved it there, I will tell you. Everybody was related to everyone. You didn't dare stay anything, but they were the most helpful people, the most wonderful people. We've been very fortunate because in the thirty years that we have been married never have we had an argument with a neighbor or anything like that. I think that is something, you know, because we have always tried to get along and tried to understand.

R: You weren't too far from Farrell then?

K: No, in fact Naegly Street would be here; the woods would be here; Mercer Avenue would have been here, and that

would have been Wheatland. So we usually knew who was from Wheatland and everything like that.

R: Then the house you built in Wheatland, how long did you live there?

K: We lived there from 1952 until 1963. Then we bought this place because the children were growing up. We needed a little more space, and like I said this was going on sure sell. We figured this was the time to make a move. We were very, very fortunate; we were lucky.

R: And you have been here?

K: Seventeen years. Many times I think it is getting a little too big for us; the road is getting a little too busy. When you sit down and think of it and you hear the kids say, "Don't sell this. This is always home."

R: In the early 1960's then, you moved here in 1963. Once you got here in 1963 what do you remember most about 1963 and 1964 living here?

K: It was very quiet. Up here it is mostly quiet. In 1960 I was at church and being how I had shorthand and typing, we were having a bazaar meeting. Father Nagorski, then the pastor said, "Well, since you take shorthand, you go ahead and take notes. You're going to be secretary." That developed. That was what happened; I happened to be his secretary. At the time sitting next to me was Anthony Mamie, one of the board members from Farrell. In fact he is still a board member. He said to me, "Can you take shorthand?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you read it?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, can you type?" I thought what the heck is the matter with this guy, you know if I'm taking shorthand and that, God knows I must type to get it done, you know? So he was talking. Finally he said to me, "Would you like a job?" This was, oh I think in January when the men had gone back to work at Westinghouse. Everything that Chet and I had saved all but \$26.18 was gone.

R: This was 1960?

K: Yes, this was 1960 when I started, yes. It was hard because you used up everything that you had had saved.

R: During the strike?

K: During the strike, yes. Now we didn't lose anything outside of what we had. In other words what I'm trying to say is what was saved in the bank was used. But we didn't go into debt. Everything was paid, and everything was taken care of. He finally said to me, "Would you like a job?" More to get him off my back than anything else, I said, "Sure." Just like that. Well, I came home; I didn't say a word to my husband because I figured that guy was just pulling my leg. The next day when I was cleaning, the phone rings. John Hector, superintendent of the school calls. He had known me when I was there, a young girl. He said to me, "Would you like to go to work?" I thought oh my God, you know? I said, "I don't know. I will have to talk it over with my husband. I never even mentioned a word." It was decided that, yes, I would go back to work for a year just in order to save money and put it all back in the bank. I've been there twenty years, and I'm still workinng. I have five more to go before retirement.

R: Oh, really?

K: When I first started in the school system. . .

R: Did they give you any special training or anything?

K: No, because I knew shorthand and typing. I don't mean to brag, but my grades from school were good. I have always been the kind that I think if you can do it so can I. I will go in and take a crack at it. If I make a mistake, I will make it early so I could fix it up right and keep going. I went in, and he liked it. They liked what I did and I was kept on. Of course, once you get in there, if you know anything about jobs like that, they keep you on. They are very good about that. I like it; I love my job.

R: That is good.

K: I'm with young kids all day, and you never get a chance to get bored because they keep you on your toes. I love the kids today. I love the ideas that they have. Sometimes I don't like the way they put them forward, but then I don't suppose my mother liked a lot of ideas that I put forward either. But the biggest change I think would say that is happening in the school district as far as blacks and whites concerned is after the racial tensions, but more so with Martin Luther King's death, you find that they are very, very touchy about

that. We have Black History Week then, and, of course, there is little excerpts of the black individual's life that you read over the sound system every morning. Of course, you are going to get a couple of kids that say, "Well, if they have black, how come we can't have white and we can't learn something about the white?" They get over it. Once the week has passed, everything goes back again. The kids are friends again, and it is not too bad. But most of the conflicts come not really from the kids. If you look real, real good, and if you follow anything up, you are going to find out that there is usually a parent behind this somewhere.

R: In the black-white conflicts?

K: Right, I think so because most of the times if you let them go by themselves, they will work it out. It may not be to our liking, but they will work it out.

R: Well, did you work every day in school?

K: Every day, yes.

R: How did you feel about the black minority leaders in the early 1960's such as Martin Luther King? If you could, how did other people who worked in the school feel?

K: Well, I will tell you. I think I can't answer for the others because there are a lot of them you have to understand that still believe that there is black and there is white, you know. I like to see grey sometimes. Do you know what I mean? It is melding of the other two. I don't like interracial marriages. I will be very, very truthful with you. I have had five girls that have come to our house and black boys have come to our house and slept over night as guests. As far as individual, I believe they have a right to get as far as they can in this world, and if they need help, I think we should help them just like we should help our own. To call somebody a nigger or not to like them because they are black, I couldn't do that because my mother didn't teach us that way. I can remember my mother telling us way, way back. I was just a little girl, and she told us about a young white girl that had been ill that lived down around Spearman Avenue. Nobody here from the other side of the water, and she became desperately ill. There was a black gentleman that took care of her, and when she became well and came out of the hospital, she married him. My mother saw nothing wrong with that. I mean she accepted that this man was

good to her and this was what she wanted. I don't know whether I could be as good as that; I mean feel that way about it, do you know what I mean?

R: Yes.

K: Maybe I could; maybe I couldn't; I don't know. If the time came, I suppose I would have to face it and see what I would do. But I would hope that I would make the right decision.

R: Do you remember the . . . Can you recall the first time you ever heard of Martin Luther King? Dr. Martin Luther King?

K: The first time?

R: When you did?

K: I will tell you the first time. It was a set of books that I had bought for our children and for a nephew in New York. They were prominent figures in black history. We sat down and we would read it. My son was too young to really understand a lot of things. He would say, "Mamma, read this; Mamma read that." One day he came with a book and he said, "Mamma, look; it says 'King'. Is he a king?" You know, he wanted to know about it, and I said, "Yes, that is his last name." He said, "Well, I thought kings meant men that sat on thrones." This was his idea of king. I said, "They are, but it is also his last name like yours is Krokoski; his is King." Then I started reading that. Then I read about Marion Anderson, and they had everything in there from the jazz players, the poets, the musicians, Mary Beth Theilia, all of them they had in there. I sat down and read about it, but that is the first that I came to know about him. Truthfully, it was to follow him was after his death that I went back and I read about him, you know, where he was born and his parents and everything.

R: Do you remember anything about rioting in other cities or seeing much on TV or the radio or newspaper?

K: TV, yes, but I am not a TV person; I have to tell you this first. I don't like violence. I don't like a lot of things that are shown on TV; me, needle point, reading, stuff like that, okay. I do remember seeing it. I remember especially Watts. That was terrible. I couldn't understand anybody destroying something that was theirs.

R: Watts, New York?

K: No, Watts district in Los Angeles out in California. Do you remember? Wasn't that Watts out there? I'm quite sure it was. Sure, that is where it was, but I just couldn't understand them destroying something that was theirs.

R: Do you mean they were showing rioting on TV?

K: They had shown the rioting on TV. Just think, they had something; then they had nothing after, and I couldn't understand that.

R: Some people feel that everybody in Farrell watching the rioting in other cities may have helped spur the rioting and tension here.

K: Bring on the tensions, well I will tell you something. I think some of it was brought in from the outside too, you know, not just right here in Farrell. But I would definitely think that the younger generation, the younger blacks would have felt that way.

R: Got a lot of ideas from watching TV.

K: They got a lot of ideas from watching TV; they got a lot of ideas from the people on the outside. They were listening to the wrong people.

R: Can you recall or remember any racial tensions growing in Farrell between the blacks and whites, say through the 1960's up to now?

K: Not so much into the 1960's, no, not the beginning of the 1960's. The end of the 1960's it started. In the 1970's I can remember one day when they had broken quite a few windows on Idaho Street and gone into the store.

R: Rioting started?

K: Yes, you know it was that. It quieted down; it took about a week that it was bad here. I could remember the neighbors up here saying that they would go out and buy guns. We had them because both my husband and my son hunted. But I can remember one particular night coming home and my nephew from New York was here. Of course, my son was very young then, I would say maybe thirteen, fourteen, somewhere around there. He would have had to have been old enough to have his first gun, his first

real gun, you know. They were sleeping downstairs and they had the two cots and in between the cots there was a gun. I went downstairs, and I asked them what it was for. He said, "Didn't you hear? They are going to come and get us." I said, "Chippy, you have gone to school with them all these years." In fact I think when he was in kindergarten there was one little black girl who had a pink dress with little butterflies on it. When he grew big and got a job, he was going to buy his sister one of those dresses. You can imagine, but he was afraid. That was the first time he was afraid. Some of his best buddies are black people.

R: Do you think there was much tension growing in the school? You don't feel the tension grew over a long time?

K: No, see, you have to understand. Like I said this was during the summer months when the months were hot. When we had already gone back to school, it was pretty much cooled down. So you may have had one or two smart alics that would have both black and white, not just black, that might have wanted to start something, but it was nipped at the bud right away because we had very good discipline in Farrell, and have a very good gentleman that handles discipline.

R: Why do you think it was just in the summers? Do you have any feelings about that?

K: I think so; I think they have no place to go.

R: Not enough recreation?

K: Really I can pick up and go to a park and go swimming or I can go here, but where did they have to go? It was hard, and if they did go, there were a lot of places that were shut to them. I think they were misguided as far as listening to some of the younger ones that came in from the bigger cities that were trying to tell them how things should be done. I don't think they are entirely to blame, no way.

R: I think the summer of 1969 was when most of the violence happened in burning. . .

K: Breaking, yes.

R: How was your family life affected by all of that?

K: It wasn't.

R: Wasn't it much?

K: No, it wasn't. Of course, I will tell you one thing. Our daughter then was graduated from school. She was eighteen. There was curfew. We have always had curfew, and she had to be in by 11:00 at night. The minute she called from anywhere and said, "Mother, can I?", it was 10:45. If she said, "Mother", it was 10:30. Do you know what I mean? So by the time she hung up she was home at 11:00. Like I said they were both born and raised with colored. You know what I mean, going to school through kindergarten and on up. They have always gotten along with them always.

R: Were you fearful for your safety at all?

K: No, no.

R: Not even in the downtown area?

K: No, no, when we worked at school, we were told that we were not permitted--this is down at the junior high building--we weren't permitted our of our offices to go--I wasn't because I was in the building by myself up until 1970. I came up the hill after my boss died and Mr. Drush died and Mr. Roscus took over at the senior high school. Then I became his secretary. But Mr. Hector was the type of gentleman if your work was done, he would call and say, "Is everything taken care of?" I would say yes; then he would say, "Well, you can go home a little early." Of course, it was against the rules, but we did it. He requested that we not leave our office alone. In other words if we wanted to go someplace into the building, that we go either with the principal or have one of the janitors accompany us or something like that. But I was the only girl down there in that building, and I wasn't afraid. This was just a precautionary measure.

R: Can you recall any specific incidents where you were confronted with any situations of violence?

K: Oh, honey, that goes even today in 1980. Do you know what I mean? You could get a couple of kids fighting and look out there is no way you are going to get away from that. I think the only time that I was really frightened, it was after Martin Luther King Day assembly. Some white person, some white child, had

started a petition that they wanted something done for the whites. They were tired of having Martin Luther King Day, this and that. Well, they were a group of them that had congregated outside the school office door.

R: Give us an idea of time that would have been?

K: Oh, this was 1974, 1975. This was in the school. It was more or less.

R: Okay.

K: We had one boy in there that evidently had, well one word was said; another word was said, and you know how that piles up, okay. Now he was in the office and there was his brother waiting out in the hall. I remember I had to go shut the door, and he wanted in. I told him, "I'm sorry. You can't come in." He said that he was going to come in whether I wanted him to or not. He came towards me. I don't think he would have hurt me. he would have only wanted in the office, but there were two other boys that stood beside him and said, "Listen to her." That was the only time. That was the only time I could ever tell you that I was frightened because they said that some of the children had knives. This was never proven. I don't know whether you heard about it. Last year we had a little bit of trouble, it lasted, oh, maybe two or three days. The Sharon Herald here I think wanted to know about it, one thing and another.

R: Do you mean racial trouble?

K: It was racial trouble in the school, yes. Truthfully, I don't think you could say it was racial trouble. I think it was kid trouble, do you know what I mean, an aggravation between the two? As far as it getting really out of hand, it never has because Mr. Roscus was the type of person that the minute any trouble starts, he gets everybody into the auditorium. He tries to get you to talk these things out.

R: Prolong it.

K: No, he wants them to meet and talk these things out. Sometimes it might get to be a yelling session, but at least they are getting at their feelings which is good.

R: Yes.

K: I don't think it has ever been really what I could say bad that I would be afraid or anything like that, no.

R: 1969 seems to be the central year when everything happened. How do you feel the police and governmental agencies handled all the violence and tension? Do you think they might have added to it?

K: Well, don't you think a lot of it was added to it? Don't you think our own government added to it? I do because if you go back and if you read what has happened with the CIA and the FBI and a few others with Martin Luther King, I think we all have our share of blame to lay on that. I really do.

R: How about the Farrell City government?

K: Now, I think they leaned towards the blacks. I really do. I think that it has become a part where maybe they are a little bit afraid at the time and backed off because I don't think they were as strong as they could have been.

R: Do you mean the government, the police and the city of fathers and this?

K: Right, right, I think there could have been a lot done that might have even helped save part of the Farrell business district. But if you are going to have people that are going to knock out your windows and everything, you are not going to stay there. Well, the insurance would be too high for one thing, and I think that is why part of our business from downtown has moved out because people were afraid to go down there. I know there are a lot of people today that will say that they won't go downtown, down on Idaho. I go; I don't care. There is a dress shop there that I like and there is my drugstore down there, Hamilton's and I go down there; I'm not afraid. Sometimes my husband gets provoked. It doesn't bother me.

R: What was the news coverage like on the rioting and violence in Farrell?

K: Well, I will tell you what. As far as I'm concerned the Sharon Herald is a very biased paper, and anything that Farrell does that could be painted black, I think they would do it a little better than what it really should be. I really do.

R: Do you think they could have added to all the trouble that Farrell had?

K: Well, they didn't help it in any way. I think a lot of it could have been written up a lot different. I think if you read anything on Farrell, I think it could have been done a lot better. Then we had a girl, Earhart, I believe from the Sharon Herald. I like her, she at least covers and gives you truth; I like her very much. Look, sensationalism sells newspapers. If you are going to buy a newspaper, you are going to paint it up a little. That is my idea of it.

R: Do you remember anything about the Black Youth Action Committee and the cultural center in Farrell?

K: That was very, very short-lived if you remember. I think they started it because they felt that some of their men were being mistreated in one thing and another as far as police, well, I won't use the word brutality. Let's just say they felt the police were sitting on them a little too tight. It seemed to quiet down very, very quickly. Well, I believe you did talk to Lyle Savich.

R: Yes.

K: Well, I don't know how Jimmy Edwards would go about it, but I think she would give you a pretty good true picture of what things were like. Lyle is very good because, boy, she likes her kids to get an education, and she sits on them too.

R: Right, right. How did your friends and relatives feel about the racial tension and violence in Farrell?

K: They would call; they would ask how things were going along, but no more different than like when Miami had their problems. I called my brother, "Is everything alright?", or when New York has their trouble. I have a sister that lives in Brooklyn, and, of course, she called to see if everything was alright. Once they assure you that it is you go about your daily life.

R: Would you call it a riot, what went on in Farrell?

K: Skirmishes; skirmishes, not riots, I hate that word. No, I don't think so; I don't think they were that bad, really. A couple of kids maybe that got a little bit hopped up on a couple of pills and a bottle of wine, and you know what happens after that.

- R: Do you know anyone who was directly affected by any violence besides yourself and your family, anyone at all that might have been a victim of some kind.
- K: No, no, I think, no, not directly affected, no, no way. Of course, it makes you stop and think about things. You get a little cautious, maybe overly cautious for awhile, but once everything settles down, you go back to your normal life.
- R: Do you think most of the destruction of property was done by the people from Farrell?
- K: I think they were helped by people from Youngstown and Pittsburgh and Chicago and few other places because it seemed as though, like I say, it happened during the summer months. Summer months are vacation months. As you know that is the time they either go down south or up to Chicago or over to New York or something like that, and I think we were helped on that situation. I don't think it was just our boys.
- R: Do you think other people?
- K: I think they had somebody leading them, you know?
- R: Somebody out of town leading them in the cause?
- K: Well, not particularly out of town; I wouldn't say strictly out of town, but somebody that talks and then this one gets a big idea. You have hot heads, white and black. Sometimes it just takes a word or two to get them started.
- R: Were there any movements that you know of which attempted to better the race relations or prevent any of the violence in Farrell?
- K: I believe Juanita Baker, she is very well-known in Farrell. I think she is on the relations committee. They tried to talk. They got into city council chambers and tried to sit down and reason with the youths and everything. I think it definitely proved to both parts to be beneficial.
- R: Any church organizations?
- K: There was Father Chismar and some Protestant pastors, but there were. There was, he was from Sharon, Reverend Levine. They all tried; they tried to reason.

R: Do you think anything would have happened in Farrell if it wasn't. . .

K: No, no.

R: Seeing things in other cities?

K: Oh, you mean that way? No, I think something had to, you know, it was the times. They were coming out; they were getting into their own and one thing and another. I think this was the period of growing that everyone had to go through.

R: Well, looking back at the late 1960's now and the racial tensions and the violence and everything, what changes would you have liked to have seen instituted in your neighborhood to perhaps prevent or better.

K: Well, you see, this is sad because you see where we live, okay? Now here there might be five families scattered out through here, Dr. Lowe, Willie Houston, Weston, Pullamans. I bet I can't name five families up this way that are black. We weren't bothered by them; they weren't coming up here. They were downtown. You know what I mean down there. That is sad because like I say that was the place that they had. That was their place and they were ruining it. I don't think they would have thought to come up here. I think they knew what would happen if they came up here. That would be another thing, but as far as changes, I wish before they had started people would have sat down and talked to one another. I think that would have saved a lot of hard feelings and everything. But you have to listen to youth today. I don't care what you say; you have to listen to youth today.

R: Right.

K: We don't like to have some of their ideas, but some of them are good.

R: Okay, Mrs. Krokoski, do you think the violence in 1969 could have been prevented or do you think it was inevitable?

K: No, I think it was the times, the changing time. I think it had to happen. I think that the black people had been held back for a long, long time. I'm not saying that what they did was right. After all I look at it this way, too. My parents came over from the old

country. They didn't know one word of English, and yet they came over and they worked very, very hard, and they obtained what they did obtain. They put that in our minds too that you work for what you want. Nobody is going to come along and give you anything. If it is, you are going to pay for it in the end, believe me. Some of the jobs they had and everything were so. . . I wouldn't want them.

R: Were they discriminated against?

K: I think so, I really do because, my God, you take a look at some of the jobs they were handed out in the mills or what they had to do. Well, my father worked at Carnegie Illinois. I could remember him coming home and they would talk about a job opening or something like that. White men would get it. He would tell my mom, "White men aren't going to get a job. Black man are because that is a black man's job." My mother was another one that couldn't see why you had to have a color to have a job. But by the same token I don't think we give them everything. Handing them things on a platter isn't the way to do things either. I think they should learn that they have to work, and I mean work for their money the say way as everybody else does.

R: Can you recall any kind of discrimination against the blacks for housing?

K: Well, I will tell you what. I can remember hearing; I don't know of any instances just specifically that I could tell you that. But I could remember hearing that at one time no black could buy a house up above Beachwood Avenue in Farrell. You know where Beachwood Avenue is?

R: Yes.

K: Okay.

R: Is that the cutoff line?

K: Yes, I mean you were here; you were over there, that thing. As long as they are clean, as long as they keep their place right, what difference does it make, right? That is the way I feel. I would have no qualms about one moving next door as long as they took the care of their place.

R: Well, how different are race relations in Farrell now

than they were in the 1960's? Are they any better or worse?

K: No, I think they are better, I think there is a better understanding of it. I think you have people now like the black gentleman, Mr. Williams, that is on council. I think they see that here is a gentleman that has had his education. He has tried to make something of himself. Then you have a lot of the ministers in town that tell them that they just can't get everything by having riots and breaking up things. You got to go out; you got to work for it. I think one minister that is very good at telling his congregation that is Reverend Tatum in Farrell. He has a congregation, and I think he does a good job trying to help his youth, a very good job.

R: Well, if you had to pick any single reason for the rioting and stuff and violence that happened in Farrell, do you think you could? Could you narrow it down to any single cause?

K: Have you ever been downtown in Farrell? I want to tell you something.

R: Okay.

K: Like I told you I was born and raised on the Hill. I never knew it was a hill. I never knew that where I lived was supposed to be good or anything. My mother never taught us that way. Four or five years ago I took a ride. I had a lunch hour with the girl that works in the guidance office. She said, "Let's go downtown." So we did. We went through the bottom parts. Now these are streets that I could remember as a young girl that I could walk through. Nobody would bother you. You didn't worry about having to be molested. The houses were clean and everything. When I saw it, I cried. I'm going to tell you something. I cried to think that people had to live in houses like that. I don't know whether it is their fault or our fault or whose fault it is. Nobody should have to live like that. I don't think so any way. I'm glad we got the housing in Farrell. Maybe that will help things a little bit too. But, my God, that was terrible. Some of the doors had no screens on them. There was furniture all over the floor.

R: It was bad.

- K: Well, I cry pretty easy. This made me cry hard. I never went back down again. In fact I came home that day and I told my husband that I was shocked because when I had married Chet in 1950 I told you I had lived down on George Street for about eighteen months. It was nice and that was 1950. So this is about twenty years later. I went downtown; I mean really downtown like to Louisiana Avenue, Florida Avenue, George Street, all back in the little nooks and crannies. I was shocked. But that just goes to show you how complacent a person can get too, because you have your own little world and you live there and that is it, you know?
- R: Do you think something that happened in 1969, the late 1960's could happen again now?
- K: Definitely, oh, yes. The only thing is I think now the city is better prepared to cope with it. I think the churches are and everything else. I think they know what can happen. I think they are more or less ready for it now. I would hope so now. But truthfully, I would rather it didn't happen. Do you know what I mean?
- R: Right.
- K: But I think it is a good deal of them being able to buy the houses now for \$1 that they are up for sale on Fruit Avenue and all of those. At one time those were all white houses. Now they are predominantly black.
- R: Do you mean you buy it for a \$1 and you fix it up?
- K: Yes, you can buy them from the city of Farrell for a \$1. The city has bought the houses, and they in turn will sell it to an individual for. . . But you don't have to be black; you can be white also provided that you meet certain standards.
- R: Conditions, right, yes. I hope nothing like this ever happens again. I hope not.
- R: Well, is there anything else that you might think important to add that we didn't cover?
- K: No outside of that fact that I think everybody should stop and consider the next person's feelings. We are all humans; we all hurt the same. When I'm cut, you bleed; I bleed, he bleeds. When you are insulted, I'm hurt, you're hurt, right? I think people should just stop and think. He is human that way I am, or the next

person is human the way. He is a living individual. He has got ideas; I don't have to like his ideas, but maybe I could learn to live with them, you know?

R: Put yourself in someone else's shoes.

K: Oh, I think so. I think if a lot of people did, they would think different. I will tell you sometimes when I see some of the kids come to school, my heart bleeds. We have kids who come to school that aren't taken care of.

R: In personal terms?

K: Home, yes. This is black and white; it's just not that. To me life is a very, very, precious thing. God grants that child should be born. I don't care whether you are black, white, striped, paisley, polka dotted, pink, blue; you are human, you show me respect, I'm going to love you. I wish everybody felt that way, but then like I say I was brought up that way. Maybe that helps a lot too. Of course, I've got something to tell you that they don't like me as well. That doesn't bother me too much either.

R: Education is pretty important to you?

K: Well, that is something that we have always stressed in our children, and from the very day that they were born, I can truthfully say that my husband saw to it that money was set aside that they could both be educated. They were. I had a son that graduated from Clarion; I had a daughter that graduated magnum cum laude from Slippery Rock. So I think we did our share, but the most important thing was that I think we got them to love. We have always told them, "Don't be ashamed to show it." I hope it has rubbed off.

R: Okay, thank you very much.

K: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW