

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rayen School Project

Schooling Experiences

O. H. 602

YETTA GORDON

Interviewed

by

Hugh Earnhart

on

March 6, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: YETTA GORDON

INTERVIEWER: Hugh G. Earnhart

SUBJECT: Rayen School, public schools, teaching, Youngstown

DATE: March 6, 1975

E: This is an interview with Mrs. Yetta Gordon for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project on Rayen School, by Hugh G. Earnhart, at 3039 Northgate Drive, Liberty Township, on March 6, 1975, at approximately 10:30.

Let me first begin by asking you, what do you remember about your parents and your family?

G: Well, I think if I remember, my parents both came from Russia. They came to Youngstown and they met in Youngstown and they were married in Youngstown in 1913. Of course, I am the oldest; I was the first born. I am the oldest of four. I have two brothers and one sister. My dad was a carpenter. My mother was what they called in those days a housewife; today the word is homemaker. But she was at home all of the time. Her home and her family and her household chores were her whole life. Of course, too I remember that they were quite religious, my mother more so than my dad. But they believed in carrying on their religion and instilling quite a bit of it into the family too. We grew up with it. I can't say that I am following all of my mother's teachings, but a lot of it has remained with me; you just can't help those things. I do remember, too, that my mother was always the type that was able to stretch. This is one thing that has come back to me since I have spoken to you last. I used to wonder sometimes how she would manage, especially during the Depression when we were a family of six. But we never went hungry. Of course, we always had a garden in the backyard and she canned. Then she shopped and would buy fruits and vegetables by the bushelfuls, apples and potatoes. We always had a storage cellar where we could keep things.

I know that when my dad came from Russia, he came first to New York; his uncle had sent for him. I remember him saying that he didn't even care for New York then; it was just too big. It was just too big of a town. He wanted a small town; he had come from a small town.

E: Did he come through Ellis Island?

G: Yes. I think everyone did in those days.

E: Did he ever talk to you about Ellis Island?

G: No, not a great deal. All I ever heard about Ellis Island from both my mother and dad were usually good things. They felt that the people there were really helpful to them. I do remember saying to dad one day-- well, this was in recent years, right after my mother had died. We wanted him to go to Florida in the wintertime and he was a little fearful of flying; he had never been on a plane. So the first thing that I said to him was, "Dad, how did you feel when you came over on the boat from Russia?" I said, "How did you feel then?" I thought he might get airsick. He said, "I felt wonderful. There were a lot of people that were sick and all I did was turn around and eat their portion of food." Because in those days he was a big eater. He was a young man and a hard-working man and he required a lot of food and ate a lot of food. But that was all that he could remember.

E: What neighborhood did they settle in in Youngstown?

G: Well, we settled in a fairly . . . well, at that time I would say that it might have been considered a low income neighborhood. But it wasn't a slum area and it wasn't what we would call today, the ghetto. It was a quiet, clean street; the homes were small. It was on Kirkland Avenue, which runs off of Walnut Street. Today most of the street has been torn down. The expressway has been built up through there. It was a friendly street; we were just like one, big, happy family. Everyone knew everyone else; we visited back and forth. There were people of all nationalities. I remember about four Jewish families, but there were Slavish families; there were Italian families that lived down the street, and everyone was neighborly and helpful. Visiting back and forth was almost a daily thing. I can remember my mother, and I can remember neighbors coming in to borrow cups of sugar at a time or eggs or milk, or maybe a couple slices of bread for breakfast and no one thought anything of it. They would just come in nonchalantly and ask for it and no one was ever refused. I have often felt that I have never found a neighborhood like that since after I have moved away.

- E: Did most of this neighborliness that the parents inhibited, was it instilled in the children as well?
- G: Yes, oh yes. The children were all the same way too. We used to get out sometimes on the street and play ball. In those days there weren't as many cars as there are today. I can remember getting the tennis racquet out with maybe one of the neighbor boys or girls. If there were several people on the street before you knew it there were three or four out. We would throw balls back and forth or hit tennis balls with the tennis racquet and it was the same way. The feeling was in the family it seemed, not just with the parents, and it carried over.
- E: Where did you go to school?
- G: To elementary school I went to Madison, which is still in existence.
- E: The same building?
- G: The same building, yes. I remember the first time that I stepped inside; I subbed there; I was doing substitute teaching. That was the first time that I had been inside of Madison. That was sometime in 1950 I believe, because I did substitute teaching for about three or four years before I went to full-time teaching. When I walked into that building and just stood in the doorway, not a thing had changed. The halls, the rooms, were just the way they were when I was there.
- E: Can you describe that building a little bit, how it appealed to you as a student walking in there for the first time?
- G: When I was a youngster you mean?
- E: Yes.
- G: Well, I remember when I first walked in the impression that I had was the vastness of the building. I had never been in a building that size. The halls were large; the ceilings were high; the stairways were wide and broad. We had a two floor house, but nothing compared to the stairway in the school. Of course, I have always enjoyed being in school. I guess I have always liked studying and I have always liked reading so I was very happy to be there.
- E: Were teachers at that time mostly female, no-nonsense types?
- G: Yes, right. There wasn't a male teacher in the building. Well, by the time I went there were only six grades. We went from kindergarten to sixth grade and then we went to junior high. The first male teacher I found at junior high. There

were no men in the elementary school at all. Of course, everything was very well-disciplined. We had to be quiet in the room; we had to be quiet in the hall. I can still remember lining up at the fountain for drinks. There were several fountains out in the hall, and everyone stood like soldiers. Yet it was all done in a quiet way. The discipline didn't have to be forced. I think the children were just that respectful in those days. Of course, we were told at home by our parents to respect the teachers too. So that was also a carry-over.

- E: What type of classes did they have in size? What would be a typical day at Madison?
- G: Well, the classes at that time I know were never overcrowded. I think the average class size might have been twenty or twenty-five children. Everything was done from books. We had no audiovisual equipment at all at that time. Everything was given to us by the teacher and of course the blackboard was used. We were always allowed blackboards in the room. The children were encouraged to use blackboards for special training or for special drill work, but everything was done with books. Then, too, in those days there was no radio; we had no radio at home and no television. So when I had homework to do, I brought it home and that is what I did in the evening. Of course, we lived not too far from the public library too. So I was able to walk there as I grew older; I could go there myself and get books to read. So I did quite a bit of reading when I was young; of course, I had the time. There was no social life such as there is today, for instance, with cub scouts and boy scouts and YMCA swimming lessons. Whatever outside activities are presented to the children, we didn't have them at that time. There were no inclinations to go away from the home and take up any other activities, so everything that we did was done at home. Most of our pastime was reading.
- E: Did you find that when you eventually went from the junior level into the Rayen School that you were prepared with the type of training that you had received?
- G: Yes, very much so. I really felt that I had had a very good background because I had been taught by dedicated, conscientious teachers who felt that they were there to teach and really saw to it that the children learned. Well, like I said in those days, discipline was no problem. I can't even remember any incident where a child had to be disciplined very severely while I was in school. The worst that happened was that he was sent or taken to the principal's office. Once in a while maybe a child would be paddled, but that was the extent of it. But we never worried about any damage being done, any vandalism going on in the building. We even had to walk to school, to

Madison. We had to walk along the streetcar tracks. There was a trolley car in those days that went from Youngstown to Sharon. We walked along the tracks and thought nothing of it. We liked to walk on tracks, on the ties themselves, but we could always hear the streetcar coming in the distance so we just jumped off. But there was a lot of land on either side. Now, of course, Andrews Avenue is all built up there. There are roads and there are buildings there. But at that time, it was mainly just field. There were several hills they had to tear down.

E: What was Rayen like in 1927 when you went there?

G: Rayen at that time, I always thought it was a good school. People used to say that they heard that Rayen was one of the best high schools in the area. The same thing was true when I went to Rayen. Things were done quietly; there was never the loudness that you hear today. Between classes I would walk in the building sometimes and the shouting was enough sometimes to shatter a window I felt. But everything was done in a quiet leisurely way. I can remember when I first entered Rayen. I was told in junior high that I should decide before I went to high school if I wanted to go to college then I should sign up for the academic course. But if I didn't want to go, they offered what they had called a commercial course. But in those days, there was no stigma on anyone who took the commercial course for instance. Only those people who really wanted to go to college in those days went. There was no push like there is today. For years they were advocating college education. But I actually am the only one in my family who did, who graduated anyway. My two brothers took some courses but they never got degrees.

E: Did the people who were taking the commercial courses at Rayen, were they counted in the honor roll as well?

G: Yes.

E: They were?

G: Yes, they certainly were when I went. Now see, they had what they called the honor roll and it was the average that counted. Though I was told that both groups were counted, I believe that in my class there were six of us that were on the honor roll. There were only sixty in the whole class and they would take ten percent. I do believe that everyone in that group was in the academic course. But I was told that they do.

E: But they had a prescribed percentage that could be on the honor roll?

- G: Yes, right, only ten percent of the class then. Out of a class of sixty there were only six of us. It wound up, I think we were evenly divided too; there were three girls and three boys. That is the way they figured it.
- E: What instructors that you had there stand out as you look back at your days at Rayen?
- G: Well, I know two that I think I shall never forget. One was Mary Louise Boyton, who was an English teacher. She was always my idea of a conscientious teacher. Even her articulation, I just used to love to listen to her talk. Every word came out distinctly. She just seemed to give us so much. Of course, we had classics at that time too: Milton, Chaucer. Then we had a lot of grammar work. She too, was a teacher who was today almost a perfectionist; everything had to be done right. Of course, I know a lot of teasing is done about teachers. If you don't do it right the first time, do it over again. But in those days that is the way those teachers really were. Dorothy Seeger is another one; she was my Latin teacher. I took four years of Latin. She was another one that I feel I will always remember because she was the same type of teacher.
- E: Take your Latin class, was most of it, the instruction, done with memory with little explanation behind it, in other words, the feeling that you were to know that lesson and know it?
- G: Right. Of course, I can't remember much about the content of what I learned, but I remember when we were studying Julius Caesar and when we read the abesset. We were assigned portions to translate and then we would have to come to class and read the translation from Latin into English. Most of it, of course, was memory, especially when you first started learning the language, because it was mainly grammar in those days.
- E: And the vocabulary.
- G: Right, and the vocabulary. You learned the language that way through memory. Now I can't go along with some of these people that say if you memorize something you don't retain it. Well, that isn't always true. I don't think you can retain it better any other way. I really feel that there are some things that just have to be memorized. Like for instance parts of Hamlet that we had to memorize in English, we had to memorize his soliloquy. I can still remember parts of it now. I have seen the play several times, and I have seen it produced. I think I even saw it once on television. When

he went to give the soliloquy I was almost saying it with him. It has been many, many years.

E: It came back to you very quickly?

G: Yes, and it has been many, many years since I have said it. The same thing is true I know with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; that has always stuck. The beginning of the Preamble of the Constitution, that we had to memorize. I don't think it was a bad thing at all, I really don't. You know things like this, as you say even though there are many times when you forget or the words are dormant, when they do come back, they remind you of a time when you did have to sit and learn them. I think they are more meaningful; they are more than just words.

E: You didn't have a special or specific speech class at that time did you?

G: No.

E: In other words, English . . .

G: It was all combined.

E: In other words, you having to get up and recite the Gettysburg Address was really exercise in speech as well as English and so on.

G: Yes, it was combined. Those were assignments; those were homework assignments, and of course I can still remember everybody had to stand alongside their seat to repeat it. The teacher sat at the desk putting the grades in. Of course, she wasn't so much concerned with the idea that it was learned, that the student knew it.

E: I wanted to ask you obviously being on the honor roll, and being in the top ten percent of your class, you spent a considerable amount of time, to borrow a cliché "hitting the books", so to speak. Did you notice any difficulty in dealing with people in the neighborhood because you went to Rayen?

G: No, everybody in the neighborhood went to Rayen. Some of the families went to a parochial school, but the others who went to a high school went to Rayen. In those days, well in our neighborhood anyway, everyone went to school and there were no dropouts is what I am trying to bring out. I don't remember ever having any difficulty with any of them. I never, I guess because I was always more or less a quiet type, I didn't flaunt my grades or my feelings or didn't feel like I was an authority on any subject because I studied so much. I



kept more or less to myself and I think because I worked so hard, I didn't have time for anything else. To me, at that time, going to school and doing well in school was all important.

- E: What about in the school itself, what did you do for extra-curricular activities around Rayen?
- G: Well, they had clubs. They had what they called the Latin Club, the German Club, the Spanish Club, and those who took the languages joined the clubs and the groups would meet after school. That was about the main activity at that time. The sports were, of course, limited. Any sports that were handled were with the boys and football was the main sport. The rivalry between Rayen and South was citywide in those days. As far as any physical activity was concerned, girls played a lot of volleyball. We had volleyball teams and we played some basketball I remember. The only sports that the girls had were intramural, maybe a freshman group and a sophomore group and so on. That was the extent of the extra-curricular activities.
- E: In other words, there was no attempt to have any girls' athletics between Rayen and South?
- G: No, not in those days. In fact, the girls' athletics were minimized; they were really organized in the gym class by the gym teacher and that was all. It was just a friendly rivalry between groups within the building. There were no attempts to do anything else outside of that.
- E: What led you into the field of teaching? Was there any particular person or any event or any incident that steered you in that direction?
- G: Well, the only thing that I can remember feeling was even as a child I always thought I enjoyed school and I always thought that this was one thing that I would like to be. I always loved children. I did quite a bit of baby-sitting even in my own family because I was always the oldest. I could never think of anything else that I wanted to do. I do know that I must have impressed my parents because it was during the Depression that they sent me to college, in 1930 and 1931. It was right in the height of the Depression and I know that it was a struggle for them. But they felt that if I really wanted it . . . in fact, I was ready to drop out because I remember my mother saying to me, "I own't be able to give you allowance for the week because I am short of money and maybe you will have to skip a meal or two." I said, "Mom, if it is that much of a hardship maybe I should just quit." No, she wouldn't hear of that. She said that it would be just for this one week. I used to go home quite a bit on the weekends and I

would get my allowance for the week and usually for my room and board paid by the week too. Because I lived with a family, I didn't live in a dorm. I went to Kent. I had gone to Youngstown and the funny part of it was, when I came to Youngstown and I signed up, I don't remember who I interviewed, but no one had told me then that I couldn't take a two year course. I mean from the start I wasn't aware of it. All I knew was that I wanted to go into teaching and somehow it didn't come out.

E: They didn't have a two year course?

G: No, they didn't have a two year course.

E: A two year normal course?

G: A two year normal course at Youngstown and it didn't come up. Then I think we were on the semester system because I graduated in January and then signed up at Youngstown for the beginning of the second semester. Somehow or other through an interview with someone the understanding came along that if I went to Youngstown I would have to go for four years. When I talked it over at home, my folks felt that the tuition for four years would be too prohibiting. I tried to get a job, and I couldn't. I finally managed to find a part-time job while I was going to Kent; when I would come home I worked as a sales girl. I was able to work during vacations when girls went on vacations. When we found out that I could finish up at Kent in two years, I started in September and then went all the way through and graduated in the summer, in August. I was able to take enough hours to get all the credits, because I got full credit for the course I took at Youngstown.

E: Speaking of normal schools, which of course were very much in vogue in the early days, as you look back at your years of teaching experience, do you think they did about as good a job as one can do for teaching? In other words, in two years of normal school training to be an elementary teacher, do you feel that you came out with about as much preparation as you could?

G: No, there were some courses which I took when I later went to Youngstown, which I felt could have been more helpful, additional courses I mean. They could have been more helpful to me when I went to Kent. The training in those days, the college training in those days, was a little different from today anyway. Even the feeling then was courses such as classroom management, and the teaching of different subjects. I think it means a lot more today than it would have even then because there are a lot more resource materials available today which is a big help. At that time we were not trained

to teach specific subjects. The only course that I can remember taking for actually teaching subject matter at Kent was reading; everything else I had to pick up on my own.

- E: What were the courses that you took? What was the emphasis of the preparation of this two year normal degree?
- G: Well, there were psychology courses for instance, child psychology. There was a course in classroom management, which I found out later was more theoretical than practical. I often thought that sometimes some of the material that we had in those days, I think, was written by professors but not by teachers. That was the feeling that I got for a long time. I think they were people who had very good ideas theoretically, but who had never been in a classroom. That was the bad part of it. It really takes the classroom experience to know what to do in a classroom.
- E: How did you survive that first day of teaching?
- G: When I first taught you mean?
- E: Yes. You started teaching in 1935 on Market Street.
- G: Yes, at the Market Street School. The first day, when I first walked in a classroom cold, naturally I was a little on edge. I was a little nervous. I had the most miserable room in the building anyway. I was put in a basement room that had no heat. All we had was a potbelly stove and the custodian had to come in periodically to keep checking it, watch it and add more fuel. Of course, those interruptions didn't help. Usually the first day of school is a good time to try to get some rapport with your students, because the children are relaxed and they are eager. The trouble started later as time went on; that is when I had problems. I can remember one day, the class . . . something had triggered them off or one youngster had triggered them off in the morning and the whole day just didn't seem right. This was maybe the second week that I had been there. After the children left I just sat down and cried. I was so exhausted I was ready to give up, believe me. I just didn't know which way to turn. Luckily my principal happened to walk by the room and he saw me. He was a very, very fine, helpful person. He was really helpful. He just sat down and in a fatherly way gave me the encouragement that I needed. I don't think it is easy for any teacher to start off. I think every teacher gets the frustrated feeling when she finds things going wrong or control hard to manage, until you begin to realize that some days will be like that.
- E: When you started teaching here in 1935, what grade level was that?

G: Fourth grade.

E: Did they have a reading program or say an English program which was for all the schools in the Youngstown district, or was it up to the individual teacher? Could you select your own books?

G: Oh no, no. You mean as far as the curriculum was concerned?

E: Yes.

G: No, you couldn't. They had books assigned. I thought you were talking about a remedial reading, like they have now. They have reading programs in the schools and they help the children who need help; they give help to them. No, we had no outside help at all. The only help that I remember getting were the supervisors. We used to have a writing supervisor who came because we used to teach; I think in those days we were still teaching the Palmer method. We had an art supervisor and a music supervisor, but that was all.

E: Did you know at that time a woman by the name of Pauline Powers?

G: Oh yes, she was at Youngstown, wasn't she?

E: Well, she taught the blind.

G: She taught the blind, yes that is right.

E: Did you ever have any blind students in your class?

G: No, I never had that. I think what they did then, even then they had classes for the blind; they didn't assign them in the regular classroom. A regular classroom teacher couldn't handle them.

E: I think she was one of the pushers behind getting them into the classroom situation.

G: Yes.

E: What she did was sort of act as the studyhall supervisor and help them with their braille, translations, and things of this sort. She wanted them in the class where they could get the same feelings for students.

G: The same feeling with the group, yes. I never had any contact with her because I never had any child that would be in that category.

E: Once you became a teacher, how did you find attitudes of parents to the students in comparison with your parents to your training? Was the same interest there?

- G: Well, in the neighborhood where I taught, I did not find that so. I felt that that was one of our problems, the lack of personal interest. I know even when I tried to contact parents several times I got no cooperation at all. If I called and asked for a parent to come to school, they wouldn't. We were encouraged to visit homes in the neighborhood too. I remember one incident when I walked into a home, it was a mess. The children there just overran the mother, and I thought--what am I going to do? I can't expect the child to act any differently at school than at home.
- E: You were expected to go out to the homes?
- G: Yes, we were encouraged to go.
- E: Was that in your evaluation?
- G: No, it was not. It wasn't anything that was set or anything that they insisted upon.
- E: It wasn't a rule in other words?
- G: No, it wasn't a rule; it was entirely up to us. I think that was one of the suggestions made in cases where we had problems. They thought maybe that might help. I tried in several instances and then I just gave up. I felt in this particular case it wasn't the answer; it just didn't help. It was just a suggestion made; we weren't required to do it. If we did it, we did it on our own.
- E: What was expected of a teacher in the 1930's? Of course, we are talking about the Depression, about those years right after the prohibition and things of this sort. What was the teacher expected to be from maybe the administrative point of view, or the community's point of view?
- G: Well, actually all a teacher was expected to do in those days was teach. In fact, I can remember we were told to stay out of politics; we were not to express views, our political views. We were not permitted to canvas for any reason. Even if it was for the school, teachers just didn't do those things in those days. I can remember the first year when I was teaching at Harrison, this was in 1957 which was about 20 years later. This one year when the school levy passed the teachers were encouraged to go out and visit homes, canvas from home to home. In the early years though we were discouraged from participating in anything that would create any different public image of the teacher. The teacher's place was in the classroom and her job was to teach the children. She or he was to be noncommittal when it came to political issues; those things were never discussed. We weren't expected to take on anything that had a commercial aspect. If anyone wanted to come to the school for instance, to offer the children something free and put up

some posters for advertisement, that wouldn't be permitted. The school was strictly a school.

E: Was the old image of the spinster schoolteacher still pretty much in vogue?

G: Yes, it was. I can remember all through my grade school I think I had two teachers who had been married, but they were widows and they carried their married name. All the other teachers that I remember were single.

E: Was this still a rule at that time do you recall?

G: I don't know whether it was. I know what the ruling was when I began to teach in 1935. When I got married I had to quit because they just weren't permitting the married teachers to teach. I couldn't tell you whether that was the ruling while I was in school because I wasn't aware of it if it were. There were things I think that just didn't impress me that much. I remember reading about the early schoolteachers that had very strict ways, that had to wear their clothes long; they weren't even allowed to show their legs. I can remember when I went to be interviewed for my first job, I had on a white dress with a red jacket. I wear button earrings a lot, and I had put on the earrings which I normally wear with the outfit and didn't give it a thought. I was told not to wear the earrings in class because they were too bright. They were just little, red buttons. I was told that the jacket I was wearing was too bright of a color. My clothes should be a little more conservative.

E: What was the hardest subject to teach in the elementary school?

G: Well, I always felt that one of the hardest subjects was reading. I don't know whether the children did not apply themselves as much as they used to anyway, but I had a difficult time with reading. If I had a good group, they were just a few of the students, but most of them really had problems with reading.

E: Did you have in your classroom structure . . . did you divide the students up into fast learners, medium learners, slow learners, in order to accomplish something?

G: In order to accomplish something, yes. You will find that there are times when you can treat the class as a whole, when you have a heterosexual group. In certain areas now when we did social studies or when we had special projects, the class could work as a whole. When it came to reading, I didn't think it was fair to keep a mixed group. Those that could go on ahead a little more quickly, I think they should go on a little more quickly and accomplish all the reading that they could in a year's time. Those that were slower in learning to read would have to move along more slowly. In a case, in reading in par-

ticular, I found that the better ones, if they were held back by a slow group, they became disinterested. They would get busy with other things; they would just lose their interest. If they felt they wanted to go ahead, they had to go ahead. That was what made the subject a little difficult because I always had to manage my time to get the groups in during the day.

E: Did you find that the school system was willing to purchase all of those items such as drawing paper, scissors, paste, and all the rest of what we call these art and craft things? Did you find that you had to put your own money into this? We are talking primarily about the Depression years or after the war when you went back to teach.

G: I remember that in some schools where I went and did some subbing that the principal was very careful in giving out materials. I suppose that was to see that a lot of it wasn't wasted. I didn't see anything wrong with that. Then I found as I went into teaching that there were a lot of little, extra things that I could buy myself. For instance, I always felt that drill was important, not constantly, but in order to keep the subject matter in front of the children. I would buy games; I have bought puzzles; I have bought flash cards and made many of them too, especially for individual help. I found that a lot of little, extra things that I wanted in my classroom I bought until I stopped teaching. As far as enough paper, crayons, drawing paper, writing paper, or scissors were concerned, we never had that problem of not enough to go around, not in Youngstown anyway.

Now you were asking me about married law.

E: Yes.

G: I was told in those days that the reason that the law was made was that there were more teachers applying for the job than they had positions. They felt that if a woman got married, her husband supported her, whereas a single woman needed the work and that was the reason for the law. This was the way it was explained to me. I honestly feel that I wouldn't say that it wasn't fair, but I feel that a woman who has been married and who has children of her own could make a better teacher than a woman who never has.

E: This goes back; you could see that during the Depression we were trying to spread the work around, but this was put on back in the 19th century and it just kept on carrying through.

G: Oh, I didn't realize that.

E: Some of the teachers at Rayen have looked upon it with mixed emotions about it, and I was wondering how you felt about it.

Then you started teaching again in 1957. Where did you go to teach then?

- G: Well, I spent one year at Harrison. Harrison was a new building; it had just been built and I was sent there. When I went to teach at Harrison I was hired as a permanent substitute. In those days they had openings for . . . If a teacher had no degree they wouldn't give her a contract. Of course, they don't today either. I taught as a permanent substitute until I got my degree at Youngstown. I spent one year at Harrison and then I went to Thorn Hill and I spent sixteen years there.
- E: In those sixteen years what did you notice in the twenty years that you had not taught? What changes come to mind?
- G: One of the big changes that I noticed through the years was more of an interest shown by parents in their children's school work, more of an interest in advancing the children, and better cooperation between parents and teachers, which I had never experienced before. Many times I remember when I was teaching at Market Street School, if I called the parent and wanted the parent to come to school, I would never see them.
- E: Why do you think that was true?
- G: I think it is because a greater emphasis has been put on learning. I think parents were becoming more aware of the fact that perhaps they had been neglecting their children, that they hadn't shown enough interest in what they were doing. Through the media, through radio and newspapers, I think there was a lot of publicity put out on the fact that children needed that interest shown in them. Parents were decrying of the lack of discipline and poor learning; teachers were decrying it. They found out that when they did get together, it helped; it helped an awful lot.
- E: You don't think it was the feeling of being awed by a teacher? A person who spoke German or broken English going to face an educated person, even if it was fourth or fifth grade, they didn't have any kind of negative attitude about going?
- G: Sometimes, yes. Of course, I have found that a lot of parents said that they had very little schooling and that they wanted their children to have it. I came in contact with parents who had dropped out of school, parents who had very little in life and wanted more for their children. That was the main attitude I found.
- E: Let me ask you a question; I think we jumped over a decade there, 1940, which was of course the Second World War. How did World War II affect you? We had rationing; we had shortages.



G: Yes, I can remember all that. I can remember it was like one of those situations where we felt that we had to face it and we had to manage. We just pitched in; it was something we had to do. We had no choice. Of course, my children were young. I have a daughter who was born in 1943 and the second one was born in 1946. So there wasn't too much pressure because the children were younger and they didn't require that much. I remember feeling the sadness in the family because both of my brothers went to the Army. My older brother was in the infantry and my younger brother was in the Navy. I remember the feeling of constant worry about them. My husband was classified as 4-F; he didn't have to go. I remember it being a very tense time, but we felt that we just had to pitch in and do what we had to do.

E: Do you remember the troop train and the USO?

G: The USO, yes, because I helped out at the USO. We had a USO here in Youngstown, right downtown. About once every six months, I belonged to an organization, and we had promised to help with the refreshments. We baked, brought coffee, and we helped to entertain the boys.

E: Was this a whole day that you spent there at the USO?

G: No, it was usually an evening. No, I never went down for the whole day. It was usually an evening because Camp Reynolds was close by and that was when the soldiers would have time off. I remember when we were there, we never had too many boys around. If we had twenty boys that was usually about the largest group. We always liked to get an idea of how many would be coming so we would know how much food to prepare. There were occasions, I remember one night, when we were told that there would be about 50 boys and when only about 20 showed up; we just wrapped up everything and gave it to them to take back with them, whatever they could carry. I remember we played cards and we had a record player.

E: With some Glenn Miller.

G: Right, and some Benny Goodman and Wayne King; those were the days that we really enjoyed.

E: Do you remember having difficulty getting certain foods and things of this sort in this area? In other words, if you had the rationing stamps and you had the meat tokens and the gas stamps, were you able to get them?

G: We were able to get them, yes. Sometimes I remember even when we had those stamps we would have to stand in line. Sometimes we would have to wait our turn. With butter for instance, there were days when there just wasn't any. Those

were the days when I would save every bit of cooking grease I could. If I did use Crisco, I would have to save it and try to use the same batch three or four times. We just seemed to manage. Of course, I didn't have a large family. We were small eaters to begin with; we didn't require a lot of food. I often wondered how families managed though. In our case, it wasn't too much of a hardship.

- E: In the 1940's if you wanted to do something as a family or just by yourself, what would you do around here for entertainment?
- G: Well, at that time, I remember in the 1940's we used to have groups get together. We would play cards. Every Sunday there was a group of us that would plan a picnic in the summertime. In the wintertime we didn't do much. We liked to go to theaters. At that time we used to have vaudeville shows at the Palace Theater downtown. These big bands used to come and the show would change every week. We got to see quite a few of them. I can remember touring companies that came through. I remember seeing "Porgy and Bess"; I think that was at the Park Theater. We had the Park Theater in those days and they had vaudeville shows out there. Once in a while we would go to a nightclub, but then it was usually beyond us. It was beyond our means and we felt that we didn't want that kind of entertainment.
- E: Did you ever go out to Idora Park?
- G: Yes, that is just what I was going to say. My husband was a very good dancer and he loved to dance. The American Business-woman's Association had a dance there a couple of weeks ago. I was sitting there and telling some of my friends around me, "As I am sitting here I can recall the times I spent on this dance floor in the summer." Alongside the openings were all open and after you got off the dance floor you had to go out for air because it was very warm. They didn't have air-conditioning in those days.
- E: Did you drive or did you take the trolley?
- G: We used to take the trolley; we didn't have a car. In fact, we got our first car after the war, after the Second World War. My husband had driven it one time and then he had to sell the car. Then things were so rough that we didn't have enough money to buy another one. There was a trolley always going every twenty or fifteen minutes so I think we had good service to the park and back.
- E: Was there any day during that Second World War that stands out in your mind as a day that you will never forget?

G: Yes, D-Day. I felt when I heard that announcement that a weight had been lifted from me and that I could fly through the air. That is just the way I felt. That to me was the most outstanding one of the whole experience.

E: How did you keep abreast of news that the troops in the Army, Navy, and so forth were going through in those two operations?

G: Usually the radio. It was on all the time.

E: Do you recall any particular newscaster that you listened to?

G: No, no I can't remember anyone that was outstanding then because I don't think I was as much interested in the newscaster as I was the news.

E: Do you remember H. V. Kaltenborn for the Pure Oil Company? He came on every night at 7:00.

G: Oh yes, I remember him. I can remember him and Truman. That experience with him and Truman, when he predicted when Truman would lose . . . I remember Lowell Thomas was on in those days.

E: That is right. Were you a big radio fan?

G: Yes.

E: Do you recall any of the programs that you sort of felt that even if the neighborhood had some big activity, you would have just as soon stayed at home and listened to the radio at least for that program.

G: Well, I don't think so. I wasn't that much of a fan. I enjoyed it. When I was home many a night I used to do my homework listening to it. Usually when I listened to it I wanted to listen to the band, the music. I remember enjoying such people as The Aces. I think they were called The Easy Aces; Jane and Goodman Ace were their names. One remark Jane made always stuck with me. She said, "We always have to take the bitter with the better." That has always remained with me. I remember listening to Gracie and George Burns and Fred Allen. Jack Benny, Rudy Vallee, those were the programs I liked.

E: The fellow that was on on Monday nights, "Give that lady in the balcony a box of Mars Bars."

G: I remember him.

E: Dr. IQ.

- G: Dr. IQ, yes. Of course, there were some daytime programs, but I think that went more into the 1950's, "The Widow Brown."
- E: Soap operas.
- G: Soap operas, those things I never enjoyed.
- E: You know the big band days, you always could turn on the radio and get music.
- G: Yes, always. It was relaxing music and entertaining. Even now I enjoy listening to them.
- E: Do you recall having any feeling about the news that we had just dropped the atomic bomb?
- G: Oh yes, that was very frightening. To begin with, I can remember feeling a sense of fright, then worrying about the reaction, what would happen. Of course, then it was all such a new thing to us; we really didn't know. It was a very frightening . . . When I did find out, the reaction of it, it was a sad thing, a depressing thing when I realized how many people had to suffer from it.
- E: You didn't have any feeling that they got what they so richly deserved, that type of thing?
- G: No, I could never feel that vindictive about anyone. Maybe at one time I felt--well, if this is the only way that everything can be brought to a halt, maybe it is worthwhile, but I wasn't sure.
- E: Well, you didn't know that much about it.
- G: Right.
- E: Is there anything else? What do you do with your time now? Your husband is retired and you are retired from school?
- G: We just like a leisure life really. We don't rush to get up in the morning. That is the nicest thing about retirement; you don't have to set the alarm. We go as we please and when we please. I feel that if we do want to do anything or do want to go anywhere, there is nothing to stop us.
- E: Obviously you are faced with many of the problems that people on retirement status face, this business of inflation. Not only retired people face this, but everyone. Do you feel almost a constant frustration with this? Do you worry that if this goes on for any considerable length of time . . . do you have certain fears?

- G: Yes, we feel it. We feel that we do have to restrain ourselves up to a certain degree, and we do. I keep wondering how long it will last or how high it will go. When I read every once in a while that it looks like prices are coming down I can't help but have the feeling--well it is about time. I comparison shop. I use whatever coupons I can get.
- E: What things do you find frustrating in the world today?
- G: The first thing I would say is high prices. The cost of living, high prices for goods, and high rates for utilities. I feel we have far more crime than we ever had. It used to be that I would think nothing of going out at night; now I don't go. I don't go a long way. I feel that there isn't enough feeling for others in the world today. I think individuals have grown more selfish. I think if more people showed more concern for the well-being of others it would be a happier place. As I mentioned before to you when I look back upon the neighborhood that I lived in growing up, I have never found a situation like that the rest of my life.
- E: It is the way the people make up the neighborhood?
- G: Yes, the people who live in the neighborhood.
- E: Is this a close-knit neighborhood?
- G: No, I don't know the people who live two doors away from me. I moved here about eight years ago. I only know the people who live next door to me or across the way.
- E: Thank you.
- G: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW