

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Farrell Race Relations Project

Farrell Race Relations -- 1960's

O. H. 495

LOUIS MOROCCO

Interviewed

by

Ronald Rice

on

June 15, 1981

## LOUIS J. MOROCCO

Louis J. Morocco was born in Farrell, Pennsylvania on March 1, 1920. After graduating from Farrell High School in 1938, Morocco joined the Civilian Conservation Corps until 1939. He then went to Thiel College until he was drafted into the Navy in 1941. Morocco then spent three years overseas as a pilot in the Navy Air Corps. When he got out of the service Morocco went back to college and received his B.S. degree. He then earned a M.A. degree from Columbia University in 1948. He then taught at Pennsylvania State University for three years until he began to teach at Farrell High School in 1951. Morocco is currently superintendent of the Farrell area school district. He is a member of Our Lady of Fatima Church and enjoys carpentry work in his leisure time.

During the racial unrest in Farrell, Morocco was working with the youth of the community through his position at the school system. He believes the racial problems in Farrell during the 1960's were the result of a complex mixture of events. Economic and housing prejudice along with racial tension all added up to the violent outbreaks in Farrell, Pennsylvania.

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INTERVIEWEE: LOUIS MOROCCO  
INTERVIEWER: Ronald Rice  
SUBJECT: Racial Tensions, Violence  
DATE: June 15, 1981

R: This is an interview with Mr. Louis J. Morocco for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Race Relations in Farrell, Pennsylvania during the 1960's by Ron Rice at Farrell High School on Roemer Boulevard on June 15, 1981 at 10:10 a.m.

Mr. Morocco, can we start out by you telling me where you're from originally?

M: Farrell, Pennsylvania.

R: You grew up in Farrell?

M: I grew up in Farrell, went to school here, and spent most of my life here outside of eight years in the service and three years at Penn State University.

R: What was your childhood like here in Farrell?

M: Excellent. I enjoyed myself. We were poor people.

R: Where did you live in Farrell?

M: I lived on Emerson Avenue which is on the lower part down by the mill. At that time Carnegie Illinois owned the company.

R: The mill?

M: The mill and so forth. The United States Steel was here.

R: What do you remember most about your parents and your family?

M: We have a very close family. I remember they were still living with me. We have a little compound here in the area

and my sister lives on one side of the compound, my mother lives in the middle and I live on the other side. My brother lived beside us too, but he moved to California about twenty years ago, so we sold that property. But we had it all in one compound and we closed out the three areas.

R: Presently you're living on Pershing?

M: That's right, 403 Pershing.

R: What was high school like for you when you went to Farrell? What do you remember most about high school?

M: Very good. I went through a building that's now going to be raised, it was on Fruit Avenue, the old high school. I was the last class that graduated from that building because then this building here was built, part of this complex that we're in now. I had a very good high school, played a little sports and wrestling.

R: You wrestled?

M: Yes, I was in wrestling. Did like most kids, fooled around in school at times. Made the mark, average student in school until I began to realize a little later on that that isn't enough. It was in the middle of the Depression because it was in the 1930's. Shortly after I graduated I went to the CCC's, which is the Civilian Conservation Corps. I enjoyed my high school; I always enjoyed school; I never left it.

R: When you got out of high school then you went right into the CCC's?

M: I went right into the CCC's because my people, they weren't on relief, but my dad wasn't making that much. They had three children and a house. I was the oldest, so that was one way. They paid us thirty dollars; they gave us eight and sent the rest home which helped to keep the family.

At that time they sent us down to Virginia and we built the Natural Bridge Road down off of Natural Bridge, Virginia. Later on we went on to the farms around Crue, Virginia and we were building dams there to save soil erosion on some of those farms.

R: How long were you there?

M: Six months, then I went to college.

R: You went to Penn State?

M: No, I went to Thiel College.

R: Thiel College?

M: I went to Thiel College before the war and took two years. I was almost through two years when the war broke out and at that time I was a civilian patrol pilot. I was taking the courses because they were giving them to young people at that time. The war broke out and they took me right away into the Air Corps. Then I joined the Navy Air Corps.

R: And were you a pilot then?

M: Yes, then I went into the Air Service. I was TBS, torpedo bombings. I was on the Miami for awhile with King Fishers and then from there I was on the Charger, a reconstructed banana boat. I was on that for a short time then I was on the Yorktown.

R: So you were overseas quite a bit?

M: Oh yes, 44 months.

R: So you finally came back in, what year would that be?

M: Oh, I got through in 1945, and finished at Thiel my other two years. Finished that in 1947--got a B.S. in Economics. I was looking at teaching and law. I didn't know really. I finally made up my mind and went to Columbia and got my Masters immediately the following year. Then I taught for Penn State for three years, and then I came here and started out as a teacher.

R: What factors do you think caused you to choose teaching and education as a profession?

M: Well, I just loved the desirable growth that teaching provided. Most other occupations were either dealing with things directly and dealing indirectly with people. I felt I wanted to deal directly with people and indirectly with things.

R: Right.

M: The other thing is that I wanted an occupation that . . . I wanted growth. Engineering, you had to deal with things. Law, you had to deal either with the business end, and there was nothing wrong with that, but you had to deal with the seamy part of life, those people who failed or got in trouble and so forth and I didn't care for that. Medicine was the same thing; you always had to deal with ailing people. Education provided the youth, the growth, the desirability of wanting something new, so I chose that because that was the kind of area I like.

I never intended to go into administration until I got into

the system and started to work up. Part of it was money, but the other part that I could do some things for education that I couldn't do in a classroom, that I could do as a counselor. I went into counseling. Then after that fell into the concept of curriculum director because counseling tends to make out schedules for young people and I saw sometimes that the curriculum didn't fit the scheduling, so I became a curriculum director, developed that.

Then when the federal government got into education there was a need for someone to write up programs and develop programs with the federal government because they were all categorical programs, so I became that. Finally, I had the three jobs--guidance coordinator, curriculum director, and federal coordinator--all at once. In a small school like this that tends to happen. At the time I was having that kind of work, we were around 3,800 pupils in this school district.

R: What year was that?

M: Oh, that was back in the 1960's. Then I finally decided, well, I ought to make assistant superintendent because the other superintendent was ready to retire. That happened in 1970 and I've been superintendent here since 1970.

R: What are some of your chief interests besides work?

M: I enjoy swimming; I enjoy a little golfing; I enjoy just traveling and that kind of thing. As a hobby I like to do carpentry work and I build things.

R: That's a good hobby.

M: Yes.

R: If we could jump up to the 1960's here, would you describe what an average day was like for you in Farrell during the 1960's? You were probably teaching here at the high school. What was a typical day like for you then?

M: I was counselor at that time. A typical day is that you saw as many pupils as you possibly could who had different desires in terms of education. Mostly at that time the pressure of going to college was great. The college boards were a great pressure. It was the war babies who were now starting to go into the school. The Vietnam War and that kind of thing was on, or the Korean War actually at that time. There were a lot of young people who wanted to go to college. Some wanted, obviously, to go and work, the typical kind of thing that you see today. The difference I see is the pressure was greater to get into college.

R: Back in the 1960's.

M: Yes, back in the 1960's there was a bigger drive to go to school. There was a little more difficulty getting into those schools because the colleges were overwhelmed with new entrances where that doesn't happen today. A lot of them got priced out. You know, there are a lot of young people getting priced out. You know, there are a lot of young people getting priced out of college right now.

R: Costs?

M: Yes, costs were too heavy.

R: How did you feel about some of the black minority leaders back in the 1960's such as Martin Luther King?

M: They were great men. I felt that they pressured the country into doing things that they normally should have done. I think they were the men that had to answer those kinds of things, the signs of the times. The pressure, the constant demand for the need to make everyone realize the communication was all there. I think it was needed. I think it had to be done. I think everybody, I'm sure, felt that there could have been another way of doing it. I don't think anyone liked the rioting, the destruction, but sometimes that was the only message that people understood that there was realism and reality to their movement.

I think if they would have tried to do it in a soft manner everybody would have felt there wasn't the realism not the reality of having to answer that problem. I think some people tried. The NAACP tried at that time in a softer manner and were almost set aside by the minority because they weren't showing strength.

Of course, see there were a lot of things that happened at that time. The teacher became oriented to unions and there was that strike going on at the same time that the young person, who demanded some preference, some understanding, some visibility, the teacher was saying the same thing really. Both of those meshing created problems in the school.

R: Do you remember the first time you heard about some of the minority movements and Martin Luther King?

M: I wasn't moved by it because you have to understand the history of this community. The black person came into this community in the early 1900's as strike pickers and then stayed here. United States Steel built this community. Below a certain section of this community were the mill workers and they built houses on 25 foot lots and row houses for the mill worker. Then above a certain section of the community,

and Beechwood is the line, they built the houses for the managers.

R: Then when everyone at first heard the hill . . .

M: That's right. So obviously what happened is that there was cleavage. The town was built on a management basis and on a worker basis. The homes were built on fifty foot and 75 foot lots so that there was a little bit of space between them. They built them in boulevards and the town is still built that way. Well, when the black people start moving in, the only housing they could get in was below Beechwood. The older housing was from Idaho Street over to the Sharon line and most of your black people were housed in there. This was the section where the Italians originally lived because they were ostracized when they first came over because the town belonged to the Irish and they lived in little piano boxes and so forth just off the mill. Well, when they got accepted and began to make their own way in this country and began to be a part of the citizenry, they moved up further on the hill and that left those places for the black person. The black person got hung up in a geographical location for, I would imagine, at least forty years and still exists there. Of course, now they can move anywhere they want to in the community as long as they have the money to buy the houses and that's the other problem.

They did tear down a lot of those homes as they became wrecked. Then in the 1940's they started to build the Federal Housing Projects and they developed those over the years. They spread them out over the town, but on the lower end, nothing above Beechwood. So the town is divided in that sense.

R: Do you think Farrell is pretty much a melting pot, different nationalities?

M: Oh sure. More so, I would say, in the 1930's and 1940's than they are now. It's pretty hard to tell a generation as they intermarried and intermixed, but the community is probably naturally, I think, the largest population is Italians and I would say next would be the Germans and Slavs. Of course, next to the Italians would be the black people, if you're looking at it from that point of view.

This town was, I would say, 75 percent Catholic and 25 percent Protestant but that's not the case now. I would imagine right now it's fifty-fifty because of the black race being mostly Protestant and Christian. There are very few Jewish families left in town. I would say there are about maybe six or seven Jewish families, so the Judean concept has disappeared from the community, even their synagogues. They don't have a synagogue here anymore. Of



course, there is a reduction in Catholic churches and Protestant churches and so forth.

See, this community went from 20,000 in the early 1920's down to 8,000--now we're about 8,500--and also to the tearing down of the 25 foot lots. Then when you go to rebuild you can't build on less than 50 foot lots, so you're taking two for one just about. So there's a difference. The same way with student population, we had as high as 3,800 here in the 1960's, we're now down to 1,500 in kindergarten through twelfth.

R: During the 1960's, could you sense a growing of any racial tension in farrell?

M: Oh sure, sure.

R: What do you think would have caused it?

M: Well, there was always racial tension. It didn't only happen in the 1960's, there was always racial tension. It broke out in the 1960's that's all. The tension was always there, but it was mild. People would let you know from time to time. The individual person didn't feel it and individual blacks or whites always got along on an individual basis, but the tone especially during school . . . in school you melted very easily and then when you went home you went home to your area and didn't see each other very often at night or after school hours. There weren't the playgrounds that you started to develop in the 1960's where you melted them again in play. Then in the 1960's we desegregated. In 1962 we started to desegregate because we had schools with almost 100 percent blacks in them and schools with a 100 percent white in them.

R: It wasn't a forced desegregation?

M: No.

R: It was all black?

M: Well, yes, oh yes. You're asking if we got cited. Yes, by the state of Pennsylvania and we had to desegregate. So what I did is closed down one school and bussed everybody to all the other schools so that we could have a thirty percent ratio. That's what we did, and without too much fanfare because we were one of the first and early ones to do it. We did it very easily because the black people were willing to be bussed, the white people weren't. So what we did was close down the black school and brought the black people into the white school. We only had to bus the black people because we are generally a walk-in school. See, we don't have to bus because everybody is within a mile and

a half of walking distance of the school. So in order to appease the kind of tension that was developing, we bussed the black people into the white school.

When we first did that there was always that trauma of the invader-invadee concept on the playground, in the classroom, in the restrooms, but it isn't as difficult to handle when you're dealing with little kids. Probably the hardest thing to do is when we were "committing the surgery" in the cafeteria. Some parents would come in and see how they're doing. Well, you know they would see a black kid and a white kid sitting side by side eating off each other's tray. The kids didn't pay attention to that, they enjoyed it. They would bite an apple and share it. That was awful for the adult to see that and my position was: You don't go into your surgery room to see your child being committed to surgery, you let the doctor do it. So you stay away and don't see those things and let us handle it because no one's dying from it, and we did that.

R: Things worked out?

M: It worked out very well. Now we had special monitors on the playground who would watch for things where kids would take things from each other, you know, and pull and a little tension would build up. Sometimes it wasn't racial as much as two kids sitting down there fighting like they do on any playground. If they were two white ones you wouldn't have noticed, but because it was a black and white one, you noticed it right away. So we had monitors on the playground to handle that. We had monitors in the cafeteria to handle those things. We had monitors on the bus so that they wouldn't fight over seats. We had monitors walking up and down the street for those kids who were walking to and from the school. There were certain sections as kids walked home that we knew were attention areas. I knew that if kids would walk down Union Street there was going to be a fight that day because that was the only time they would walk down that way. Those were open areas where you could fight.

R: By monitors do you just mean teachers?

M: Yes, well, teachers or adults or special hired people who were mostly senior citizens, that kind of thing.

They would walk down Roemer Boulevard and they would gang up, stopping cars going up and down. They would walk down Naegely Street and in back on the alleys and they would tear down fences and they would do things like that. Well, we would know and we would watch where crowds would develop and then we would send out our people and disperse them before they would get started.

R: Do you think what happened in Farrell with the racial tensions and violence was a result of a type of domino effect throughout the country as a whole spreading from other cities and then to Farrell?

M: Oh sure, but I'm sure that there was origination from here too. I couldn't say that it was all domino effect. There is a genesis that occurs within along with that. I think just the general tension that occurred all over the country with television being so close to everyone, that whatever happened in any city could happen here overnight. The communication was so fast. These people had trained people in every location who believed in that kind of contact and developed organizations for this particular purpose. They could tell you when a riot would come because they would create it. It was very simple to see. It wasn't very difficult to see.

You had to get to those leaders to make them realize that anything that was happening in the country didn't necessarily have to happen here, that there could be another way that it could be done. The communication was strong enough that you would be killing to have those things. So we would have seniority programs; we would have human relations people who would hear these kinds of things. We even had a Ministerial Association that we developed. When kids would react we would have the Ministerial Association deal with them.

R: Trying to prevent some violence?

M: Trying to prevent any kind of thing that would go on. No violence ever occurred in the school. Violence always occurred outside the school. When they destroyed the downtown section during the 1960's they never touched the schools. Of course we had a philosophy in this school system that the school is a place that you come to all of the time. Remember, we're a walk-in school so that everybody plays here, and so they didn't want to destroy their area; it wasn't an enemy camp, it was a friendly place.

We have a breakfast here; we have lunch here, even during the summer we have lunches for the kids. They play here; we have all kinds of programs. We have developed a city recreation program along with the school. All of the school areas are city playgrounds along with extra playgrounds that the city owns. So it is a home to them you see. They've never reacted against the school. That didn't mean they liked the education, but it was a second home so then why destroy your own home. At least that was the attitude that was caught. Of course we attempted to create it in that fashion.

So they hit the stores, but you have to understand why they

hit the stores. That was something they could take and keep. You have to remember too that there was a reason behind that. Some people would break in the stores because they needed things. The drug scene came on about that time also. So if a person was breaking a window because he wanted to see the racial message, the next guy did it for drugs, the next guy did it for money. It wasn't all one concept that you did it to make everybody hear the message, "Hey, you're mistreating us in this country and we want you to hear." There was some of that and there was some of the other and I think the destruction came not by the people who were really trying to give the message that blacks should be heard, but by the people who were looking for money and by the people who were looking for drugs.

- R: Do you think most of the violence was caused by people from Farrell or from people outside?
- M: A little bit of both. Sure there were people brought in. Those were the starters; they were initiators. But hell, you brought them in, you see, to give the message. There were organizations within the community that would develop that and have these people. It was no different than unions when they first started out. They brought in their goons didn't they, to create the fever that needs to be created when you want to get mass destruction and panic and temperments flare. I think the black man learned that from that kind of concept. I'm sure the unions aren't to blame for it. It was a concept that was developed and whenever you want to be heard. The young people are doing it now. The Vietnam people are doing it now, but they're doing it in a passive way. It's not a new concept. India has done it for years, of the passive starving position that everybody gets. Ireland tried it, now people out in California are trying it. It's a better way than terrorism. I'm not sure that both are right, I'm just saying that it's easier to handle. It's not as destructive.
- R: Was you life or any of your family's lives ever affected by any racial tension or violence?
- M: Well, mainly only mine. I got threats from time to time.
- R: Here at school?
- M: At school or at home. I've had people come over and take over my office during the early days. You have to be strong. "If you want to kill me and you want to hit me, what are you going to get?" You're not going to get a thing; I'm not going to listen. I'm going to call the cops and get you out of here, but if you want to sit down and talk to me and let me hear what's bothering you I'll be glad to listen to you. Those kinds of things happened. If a person threatened me with

bombing and so forth I used to tell them to make it good because if they didn't I knew who they were and I would come after them and see that I got them; so you better do a good job before I get you. Then I would call up a leader and say, "Look, your man called me up; I've been threatened; I'm coming after you. I don't give a damn who it was, I'm coming after you. Tell your goons to get the hell off of me."

R: Did you ever have any trouble with them then?

M: No, never.

R: No one ever carried out their threat?

M: No one ever destroyed my car; no one ever destroyed my home or did anything. I got calls, yes. I used to get calls at all different kinds of hours of the night, but only threats that way.

R: At that time you were assistant superintendent?

M: Yes.

R: Would you label what happened in Farrell during the summer of 1969 a riot? Why or why not?

M: Yes or no. Sure they destroyed things, so obviously if you're saying . . . To me riots are people who are fighting amongst themselves and hitting each other and fighting. We didn't have that kind of thing. We would have bands of people going through the business section breaking windows. That was the kind of thing that we had, which was creating coercion, which was creating the erosion of the talk stage. The police would have to go out and actually grab these kids and there was always the concept that they manhandled them and the threats that they had violence and all that stuff. There probably was some on both sides. How often can you take and be pushed before you don't use the club, you know.

I think it was a retaliation kind of thing. I think that some of the people who were involved--it got ahead of them because in their anger, in their safety for themselves--tried to do those things. I'm sure they became violent.

R: Do you think the police overall handled the situation well?

M: I think our police did, yes. I think they made some mistakes, but I think in general they did a good job. We only had one outbreak totally and after that we never had another. We had talks; we would have crowds and then they would disperse them. We would have town hall meetings, that kind of thing, that happened quite often. But the kind of riot of destroying

property and burning things down, that only happened once and it didn't occur again because they began to see themselves, that self-destruction was not the answer either.

R: How do you think the Sharon Herald reported the events in Farrell during the 1960's, fair?

M: I think they tried to do the best job they could. Obviously, each side felt they didn't print enough or each side felt that they printed their side as the bad guy. I'm sure that the community felt that the Herald at times was printing too much. That they could have left somethings out and it would not have kept on the irritation, but then that's the job of a newspaper. If that's new and it's happening every day, I guess you print it every day. On the other hand, if some of those things weren't printed . . . I would imagine that there might not have been some day when the cooling process could have started, instead of the stirring. I don't think they did it intentionally, it was just the nature of things.

It was on TV. The TV people started to come in. Then there were some people who enjoyed that kind of publicity who would make damn sure that wherever there was a newspaper person or wherever there was the TV or wherever there was a cameraman, they were in the picture.

R: Creating news.

M: Why sure.

R: What do you know about the Black Youth Action Committee? Can you recall what their demands were to the city?

M: Oh sure, their demand obviously was equality, right? Equality in everything which tended to have a treatment of preference because you had to do it now. So if you had to hire, you had to hire a black versus a white and that caused some other kind of tension to develop. It was needed to be answered more than all the laws that we've created since then that tries to answer the human concept both on race, sex and so forth.

R: Can you recall any specific examples of racial prejudice in Farrell during the 1960's. Say for example, in real estate, jobs, or socially?

M: Sure. Well, fundamentally, jobs weren't as apparent and visible as real estate. Real estate, obviously, was very visible because only blacks could buy property in certain sections of the town. Blacks could not buy property other than in Farrell in many places. It was rare that you could buy it in the contiguous towns here. Some of that still exists. If you have the money you can buy anyplace, but

there's a limit to that amount of money.

R: Was there a lot of red lining back then?

M: Well, no one admitted to it, but yes, I felt that there was. I felt that there was a lot of red lining going on. You couldn't blame it on any one person because no one person was responsible. The real estate people used to hide behind the idea, "If you didn't call me I wouldn't know that you were out there and that's legitimate." They made damn sure no one called them or if anybody called them, they weren't prepared to handle that situation. That was legitimate too, because you have to have the right to handle something you want or don't want, right?

R: Right.

M: But you see the residual situation occurred that created red lining. They didn't do it purposely, they didn't do it by design. It became by default, by omission not commission. So, you know, who are you going to blame when you have the line of omission occurring or do it by default? You know, if I'm not available, I'm not available, that's all. I'm sure the jobs occurred that way, but real estate you saw it more visibly. It's a little more hidden in the job area.

R: How about socially?

M: Socially the same thing occurred, but that was one of which, I think, was by choice. No one fights for the right of being buried in any particular cemetery do they?

R: No.

M: So using that concept, I don't know that you fight to go to a dance if there's no one there that you want to dance with. Those kinds of things are by choice. Just to have the privilege of doing that, but I think by choice they do that. You see that happening everywhere you go. You sit by a friend when you eat, you don't necessarily want to sit by a stranger. You do when you have to, but you don't do it by choice. I think every human does that. I don't think that has anything to do with color, it transmits itself that way.

R: Do you think a lot of prejudices, not mainly prejudices just people's own choice . . .

M: I suppose, you know, it's a typical thing. Hell, why should I sit with you if I have a friend here I like better. I don't sit by you because I dislike you, I just sit because I like the other person better; he's my friend.

I do the same thing. Hell, I have strong feelings. You know,

prejudice is just strong feelings and I have strong feelings about some things, but I don't necessarily have it in that area. I don't like every black person in this world and I don't like every white person in this world.

There are some people that mistreat you and you dislike them. I'm sure everybody had that, right? You attempt to be just and being just doesn't necessarily have to be fair. You know, the two are separate. Justice answers a problem, it doesn't answer whether it's fair or not. Fairness, I think you try to answer the human element. Justice tries to answer the legal element. Justice sometimes isn't necessarily fair; it is just answering the legal situation that occurred. Fairness tends to bring in the human development and the human commission or omission--to sit down and say, "Well, you know, let's try to work the thing out." I think most people respect you if you're fair.

R: Do you think any single group was responsible for the racial unrest and violence in Farrell?

M: No, no single group. I would say there were two or three groups that may have been the catalyst for these kinds of things.

R: What groups were those?

M: I don't remember the names of them, but they had two or three groups that were pretty well known in those days, that developed from the violent sources. Mohammed X group . . .

R: The Black Panthers?

M: The Black Panthers. There was another group; I can't remember the name of it, but they developed and those people came out violently and said they were violent and would answer through violence. They made themselves known, but they dissipated fast. They lasted a couple of years and then they dissipated because again, justice had to answer those things legally. You know, you just can't break the law; if you do you're going to have to pay for it. Whether you felt you were right or wrong wasn't the issue. If you broke the law then you paid for it.

Many of these people broke the law because they took everything in their own hands and became the vigilante, became the law in order for themselves, and attempted to answer it that way. Of course, they couldn't survive in the society in this nature.

R: Looking back at the 1960's and the racial unrest in Farrell, what changes would you like to have seen instituted in the school or the city as a whole?



- M: Well, we made those changes. We had desegregation programs; we developed the cultural programs so that people could see that it was much easier to smile, much easier to grow in peace. To look at the theatrical, music and theatrics tends to save the soul. Through music and through the arts, through crafts, we attempted to bring people together. It was much easier to bring them together and they could play and sing and develop. So we had programs of this nature attempting to do that. We had some various kinds of parenting programs to make people understand, talk kinds of things; sensitivity programs, and an "I'm okay, you're okay" kind of program. We had weekends of that and we had camp-ins in our gym developing that kind of program.
- R: What was the percentage of blacks to whites then in the 1960's?
- M: In the 1960's it was just about 60 to 40. In the early part of the 1960's, it came around about 58 to 52, something like that, you know. Right now it's 52 to 48.
- R: Fifty-two percent white?
- M: No, 52 percent black and 48 percent white. That's the way it goes now. It went from a 60 to 40 to a 52-48.
- R: It was sixty percent black?
- M: It reversed you see. We had 60 percent white and 40 percent black, now it's 52 percent black and 48 percent white. Some of the white flight occurred and moved out and went to the contiguous hinter land here. Some of our pupils moved into the private school. That's pretty well settled down. We were losing population from the 1960's to now. I think we're at the bottom now; we're starting to grow again. This year for the first time I see signs of growing, about ten kids.
- R: Do you think what happened in Farrell, the racial problems, was inevitable?
- M: Sure, absolutely! The inevitability comes by the process of living. If you know that something's wrong and everybody sits down and hides and runs away from it, eventually it's got to eat you. It's like any cancer. If you slow down--neighborhoods starting to go down--that cancer will eat into the rest of the neighborhood. Cancer works that way. You can't keep a citadel of people closed into an area and not attempt to do something for it--to clean it or educate it or do something that will change that process of living. If you ignore it and leave it go, it will deteriorate to the point where it can't deteriorate anymore.
- R: Besides all of the programs you helped institute in the school here, did you participate in any group or organization concerned

with racial problems outside of the school?

M: Constantly. Can't do without it. I belonged to every black organization that you could possibly belong to and every white organization that dealt with it so that you could deal with it constantly on a talk basis. Someone would give me information of how they felt, what to do, I would listen and hear and attempt to react to it. It was the only way you can do that. That was how you built self respect and that was how you built up any kind of honesty that people would listen to you. If you were going to do something then they believed you or they didn't. The credibility had to be built.

R: How different are race relations in Farrell now compared to what they were in the 1960's?

M: Fundamentally I don't think there's any real difference except for people can now talk about it. I don't think people feel any differently. I think the white people in town are just as afraid of a take-over as they were twenty years ago. I think they still feel that the black person had the advantage. I'm saying that in general. That's because the education isn't there. We have a lot of senior citizens and they've never changed. The young people have disappeared, now the young people are coming back. They don't have a problem with each other as much as adults have a created kind of feeling because they never mixed; they stay separate. That goes along with the black and the white. The only difference is the black person reaches out easier because he still wants something. The other guy is conservative because he's trying to hold onto what he's got; he doesn't want anybody taking that away from him.

I think it's a simple process that you can boil down to. It's complex to answer. It was simple to know why it happened, the only problem is trying to change it; it is a slow process.

R: Overall, would you say things are better?

M: Yes, much better. It's livable you see and you don't have to worry everyday that someone might be out there ready to destroy. There's some self destruction going on now, some despair, some apathy that I don't like to see because poor people in general feel that they can't get out of the hole.

R: They're trapped.

M: They're trapped and they don't know what to do about it. This is not necessarily a racial thing. I see the different kinds of economic torment that exist right now creating cleavages in classes. You know, it's the rich and the poor again; you see that cry beginning. That probably is more bothersome

right now than anything else because a lot of the poor people have lost their jobs; they've lost their food stamps; they've lost a lot of things and they feel trapped. They get welfare and they were even held up on that with their checks.

R: Just recently, yes.

M: So you see, despair is bound to occur. Now what that will transmit, I don't know. So far I don't think it'll be violent. It it would go on say, another six months or a year, yes, I think they would be violent again. It's no different than any animal who you trap in a corner; he's got to come back fighting; he doesn't want to die. So he come back fighting. Now how he'll come back fighting is different. New generations take on new things, that's why it's hard to answer. I can go back in the 1960's and know what they did, but this new generation won't do the same thing they did. They will try something new. And it will affect us differently and and we'll have to answer it differently.

R: How do you feel the racial problems affected the reputation of the city?

M: It hurt it. It's no different than Youngstown. What Youngstown is going through now, we went through. I can see we have upward mobility now. We were going down constantly, but we have upward mobility now. You know, a lot of the young people are moving back into town because it's the cheapest housing to buy, rates are much different. The school has always maintained a good name and it's always had a good following and so people don't mind moving in town for the school. I think it's the neighborhoods where they feel they have to be careful.

R: Is there anything else important that you would like to discuss that we didn't cover?

M: I think I've covered everything important.

R: Okay. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW