

Tremont Oral History Project

Interview with Robert Ceccaralli

Interview by Brian Detrow

Tremont, Ohio

20 March 2003

D: Alright I have three questions to start. And the first is what is your name?

C: My name is Robert Cecceralli.

D: Okay and can you spell it for the record.

C: Uhh C-e-c-c-a-r-l-l-i.

D: Okay and um when did you move to Tremont? Did you live there?

C: Um I grew up in Tremont from the years 1952 until I left in 1973.

D: Okay um did so where you born there or...

C: Yes.

D: You were born there and when did your parents move there?

C: Well my mother lived there all of her life as a kid and every thing.

D: Oh really, wow!

C: So and she lived on Therman Avenue. And the moved into the house that I was born at in 1952.

D: Okay um do you know why she decided to move there?

C: I think she just wanted to stay in the neighborhood she was always, she was always there in the neighborhood. And um grew up there and every thing she decided to move there and stay there.

D: Uh ha what about just moving to Tremont in general? Before she moved to that neighborhood when she was younger do you know why?

C: Uh you mean why she moved there to begin with?

D: Yeah.

C: I have no idea. I know her grandmother, my grandmother or her mother lived there and they

were just always there. I don't know why they, you know, chose to live there.

D: Uh ha do you know where they came from?

C: Uh well my mother, my mother's mother came from uh Poland.

D: Okay.

C: So and her father came from the Ukraine so they were Polish and Ukrainian descents.

D: Okay there's a pretty big polish community I've learned about Tremont so um...

C: It's pretty much yeah well now it's not as much but uh you know in the earlier days it was all ethnic all different kind of ethnic people mostly Polish like you said.

D: Do you know what else was in the area, what other ethnicities lived in the area?

C: Uh Polish, Greek, Ukrainian uh that's about all I know of.

D: They all live in the same area or was it uh just mixed?

C: Mixed.

D: Just mixed?

C: Yeah everybody lived you know all together.

D: Did you talk to everybody or was it hard to communicate like to people with accents or anything like that or was it just....

C: Uh when I was a, when I was a kid and when I was a teenager also it was uh yeah it was a little rough yeah. You know like mostly like my parents or my mother you know had learned to speak English which she had a lot of like grandparents still spoke no English at all. A lot of churches too. Different churches.

D: Yeah there's a lot of churches in Tremont.

C: A lot of different churches in that area.

D: Did you go to church?

C: Yes went to St. Augustine's on West 14th Street. It's still there.

D: Did they speak Latin or any thing or a language there or was it English or...

C: Uh it was early Catholic still spoke the mass in Latin, still in Latin, I can't remember when it turned English but I remember when I was a kid it was still Latin.

D: Was it um was it I don't know....did the Polish community go to the Catholic church was it uh or was inter-ethnic or were the churches divided by where you came from? Do you know?

C: Uh some of them were like there was a church uh some were just like Polish churches, some were like Greek churches. You know different descendants Ukrainian churches you know the different descendants of people went to those churches that they came from what they knew...

D: Right. Did you visit other churches or was it pretty.... you just went to your church.

C: No we visited other ones. Basically you know I went to St. Augustine's but I can remember like going to mass at St. John Cantius which is a different church, Our Lady of Mercy which is a different church. Because a lot of my friends when we were kids were different descendants of we would go to each others churches at times.

D: Was that a big thing going to church?

C: Oh yeah.

D: It was normal to go to church.

C: Oh yeah.

D: And it was the same thing with all your friends then...

C: Yeah everybody went to church.

D: And so your neighbors. Were your neighbors your friends then or were they just? Were they just all around the Tremont area or were they close by or outside of the neighborhood?

C: The friends I had?

D: Yeah the friends that you had. The friend that you went to church...

C: Oh all of my friends were from different parts of the area. See the neighborhood was set up where you could walk to every thing that you wanted to go to. You know different stores and stuff. You had your corner delicatessens, you had your little hardware store, you had your little clothing store. You know pharmacies things like that, you could walk to wherever you wanted. Wherever you need something. So as far as friends and stuff we were all within walking distance from each other. You know we would all maybe like have a meeting place but you know we would all... you could play and have fun and every thing like that

D: So there's no point to going outside of the neighborhood?

C: No everybody usually just stuck to the neighborhood.

D: Then as far as transportation do you remember you could obviously walk everywhere was there any need too drive any where or any thing like that did you have a car back then? Did your parents have a car?

C: Yeah we had a car. Yeah my father had a car but uh for the most part he took the bus to work, you know that was another thing...the bus route...the bus routes to downtown Cleveland you know or other parts of the area, you could basically... you could get away with not having a car. Everything was pretty much in the neighborhood.

D: Um was it...was...do you think the shops there uh...you said there's a bunch of little different shops. Were they are run by the different ethnicities? Did you go even if it was a little rough like you said to communicate with them? Um did it matter what store you went to or was it just like you go to the different stores or did you go to the certain ones you felt comfortable with or was it...did it really matter?

C: No it didn't matter. You could shop wherever you want to and still you know you could understand the people...you could know what was going on. But that's what was kind of neat about the place too. Everything was like right there you know it was like its own little community.

D: I know it's kind of sectioned off too. I noticed that besides everything being there that it looked to me like it was hard to get out especially if you didn't have a car. But you guys had a car so it seemed pretty easy. Before the highway um I know that you guys were kind of sectioned off kind of where you had the bridges over the rivers on the right side or the east side, is that right?... and I'm under the impression that it was hard to get to the city without a car right? Is that right?

C: You mean to get downtown?

D: Or to anywhere for that matter.

C: Well kind of yeah.

D: Because I know there's these bridges and um I learned from my last interview that uh sometimes the bridges were out so I don't know if you had the same similar experience that umm... you graduated in 1970 you said so um and I think the highway was built through the 1960's thru the 80's is that right?

C: I think the highway was built like early 60's

D: Early 60's...so before that was it easy to get in and out or was it there uh was the bridges problem or anything like or was that before that?

C: Oh you mean like before the freeway if you wanted to get out and go somewhere? Was it hard because there was no freeway? Is that what you're trying to say?

D: Well yeah with the bridges being out sometimes periodically did...was it enclosed...was it an enclosed place...was it an enclosed community for a lot of people?

C: I I would say so yeah it was a little hard if you needed to get out of the community you know it was pretty much a lot of side streets a lot of bridges things like that you know to get you out you know.

D: Do you think it was essential to have a car if you wanted to get out?

C: Yeah, yeah.

D: So you lived there during the development of the highway. So you probably saw a lot of the effects that it had on the neighborhood um do you think that had a large effect on the church or the churches there?

C: I think it had an effect on everything. On everything...churches, the community itself I think it kind of chopped up the area you know they lost a lot of residents because they had to they had move out. You know it took a big section out of the area a lot of houses you know and the community just wasn't the same then you know after that. And another thing I think it did too is before people didn't have easy access to like the suburbs so once the freeway come in people could make their way to the suburbs. Like North Royalton, Parma Heights, West 150th Street, West 130th, Lakewood, and they got to see these areas, you know and probably started thinking hey this might be nice to live here, so that gave them access to see these places live there and you eventually move there. Where a lot of residents that might have stayed there you know kept the community going just left, you know just left the area.

D: Do you think most the people that left were people who owned cars that or the people who didn't probably stayed in that area.

C: Right I think so yeah.

D: Um did you get married in Tremont?

C: No I got married in Apple Club off of Pearl Road.

D: But you lived there with there with your wife?

C: No my wife lived off Garden Avenue. Off 25th Street. And I lived in Tremont until I got

married.

D: Do have any good memories of Lincoln Park?

C: Yeah where do you want to start? Well it was a very fun neighborhood to grow up in. Very fun neighborhood. I don't know if you know anything about the Lincoln...they call them the Lincoln Bathhouse...Lincoln Park Baths. Which was the reason it was named that was at one time in the area I don't know how long ago In the area but a lot of houses that were built there didn't have hot water. They didn't have...they had cold water but they didn't have hot water. Especially some of the buildings...some of the houses that had like boarding rooms and things like that so this Lincoln Park Bath was a place for it was specifically for men to go and take a hot shower. And that's what that's what they used it for then later on they converted to a uh recreation center and that was our main hangout when we were kids. It was a recreation center it had sports going uh football teams community football teams which I played on.

D: Was the football teams play other community football teams or was it uh...

C: Yeah we would play teams like Esterbrook which is off of Fulton Road uh Clark Recreation which is on Clark Avenue. We played teams like that we were only ten years old there was peeewee football team. You know but they had a lot of activities.

D: Were they related to the school or were they separate?

C: Separate from the school.

D: Were there any sports that () with the school?

C: Pardon?

D: Were there any sports that uh you could play from school, or like on school teams or any thing like that that they have know or was it was every thing separate?

C: You mean from like Lincoln High School?

D: Yeah.

C: Oh yeah they had sports teams.

D: Did you play on any of them?

C: Yeah I played uh basketball, football, and cross country.

D: We will stick with Lincoln Park...what else was there...did kids just kind of hang out?

C: It was just the hangout place uh that's basically where we learned to drink you know when we got to be teenagers, and uh they had the pool...the Lincoln Pool which was in the park there that was a big hang out we used to have beach parties and stuff like that at the pool and sometimes we'd go down to Edgewater and have parties. I remember one thing getting back to some of those churches that we were talking about the way people got married in that neighborhood the churches most of them churches have halls in them you know and they supplied the food and you have your polka bands and things like that. That's the way most people in that area got married within the community. On a Saturday night you can probably find about five or six weddings going on in the neighborhood. Because of the different churches and you know people just getting married and when we were kids what a bunch of us used to do we used to go to the back door to the halls and we used to knock on the backdoor to these old ethnic women making the food you know and we'd say "we're hungry can you feed us?" you know and they'd say yeah sure and we'd get these plates of food and every thing. Sit on a curb and chomp down on food. It was fun.

D: That was when you were like young teenagers then?

C: Probably about 12, 13, 14 years old.

D: Did they...would you say that when you did that you could recognize everyone from the neighborhood like when you were going around and just kind of doing your thing like when you are a kid...do you think that everyone would recognize who you are like that's so and so's kid or that's...

C: Yeah everybody knew everybody it was that kind of community.

D: Um was there...they had receptions then in the church, there's a hall, that's where they are having the reception I'm taking it. The church is in the same place.

C: Right.

D: Did they have any thing going on at the church like dances or any thing like that?

C: Some of the churches have dances.

D: Did you guys go to that?

C: Mmhmm oh yeah.

D: Were there dance halls that weren't part of the church?

C: Uh yeah there's one on 14th near 14th and Fairfield I can't think of the name of it that was just a plain hall you mean like a hall without a church.

D: Uh ha

C: Like a dance hall or something yeah there was one I cant think of the name of it then there was one Auburn Ukrainian Labor Temple that's what it was called.

D: Was that uh purely Ukrainian or did every one go there then?

C: No it was probably just Ukrainian because there were some clubs around like some of them bars there down there like ones called Polowski Post 30 you know that's a Polish bar you know, a lot of bars in that neighborhood too.

D: I noticed...I was under the impression that the bar wasn't necessarily the place for the guys it was almost a family place did you have the same impression?

C: Mmhmm yeah there's one called Dempsey's Oasis Tavern which is on Starkweather and I remember when I was a kid there's two things that we did on Fridays when I was a kid with a family one is we went down to St. Peter and Paul Church and got pirogues there was a bunch of old ethnic women that made pirogues that was either Friday dinner or we went to the fish fry which was at a bar. And the family would go and get a fish fry. Played the bowling machine and drank red pop and my parents would drink and that was our Friday nights.

D: What's a bowling machine?

C: A bowling machine? You don't know what a bowling machine is?

D: No.

C: It's uh a long machine that has bowling pins at the end of it only it's electric and you take the ball and you bowl and when it goes across these runners on the bottom like pens are set up here like that and then on the bottom there's these metal runners and when the ball runs across the runners the pens flip up. And then it keeps score on the top.

D: Alright was it pretty popular then?

C: Oh yeah.

D: Yeah I've never heard of that did they have pinball or any thing like that?

C: Uh, not too much no usually bowling machine.

D: Were they all in different bars or were they?

C: Most of them I never even thought about that you might not know what that.

D: Did you have to pay for it was it a nickel or...

C: Yeah a dime.

D: Actually I have a question um you said...you that's when you first learned to drink was in the park how did you get your drinks did you know someone that was older?

C: Yeah you would usually find someone that was old enough to buy for you and then take it back to the park and drink away.

D: Would you get in a lot of trouble back then or was it more...

C: It wasn't serious trouble you know it was just just kind of fun trouble nothing real serious. I remember one time we uh there was this guy that lived two doors down from us and he had a pear tree...that's another thing there were a lot of fruit trees in that neighborhood.

D: Fruits, like just apple pears or...

C: Apples peers and plums a lot of plum trees, I don know how they emerged you know there was a lot of them there I don know how they got there so we went and picked this pear that he shot us with uh a shot gun full of rock salt, boy did that hurt. You know it was stupid fun like that.

D: Right um anything else about Lincoln Park that you can think of?

C: This was probably when I was 10, 11, 12 years old...they always had these old ethnic guys playing cards in the park. You know they had their suits on they'd sit in the park with their suits on and their hats and I don't know what kind of card game they were playing but they would like throw their cards like that and then you had your bums..there was bums a lot of times laying on a park bench sleeping.

D: Oh really how did the community deal with that?

C: They just let it go, let um sleep it off.

D: Were they a threat?

C: No no no threat at all.

D: Did they try to get change or money or anything like that?

C: No.

D: The guys playing cards...do you know what ethnicity they were?

C: No wasn't English haha! At the pool they used to have swimming lessons when I was a kid. It was always packed the pool was always crowded. Trying to think of more they used to have this was like even might have been before I was born but I remember a little bit they used to have these...you've been to the park right?

D: To the Lincoln Park?

C: Yeah.

D: Well I drove around.

C: They used to have these big bushes on each corner each corner of the park...big huge bushes and they got rid of them one time they cut them down because girls were getting raped behind the bushes. I remember that when I was real little.

D: Was it violent over there at all or was it just at night time or anything?

C: There used to be a lot of fights in that park during the 50's...in the 50s that'd be before I was born or maybe when I was little you know because I...probably been 1957 when I was five years old there used to be a lot of gang fights at that time like 50's you know leather jackets and the switch blade knives and all that kind of stuff...a lot of fights.

D: And that just...did that pass because the population went up and there were more people there or the services were better?

C: I think just the times you know during the 50's that was the thing you know gang fights I think it just passed with time.

D: Do you think they just moved to different areas? Do you think Tremont were there other crime that was going on then I mean that you were aware of or do you think it was a pretty safe community?

C: I think it was pretty much safe like I said I think it was pretty much that period in time because when I was growing up and went to the park and stuff like that there was nothing going on.

D: Was there any kind of things like that from the bar like did people get drunk at the bar and have a fight or brouhaha or any thing like that or...

C: No.

D: It was pretty it was community based.

C: They did have a problem with blacks at one time, blacks lived in the projects.

D: Was that in Tremont or was that like the projects in Tremont I don't know where...

C: It's like at the very end of Tremont like down by West Fifth at the end of Tremont... West Fifth... they then you get into these projects there like apartment buildings.

D: I have a map there like from the 30's so they're outdated but I think they have general roads.

C: West Fourth? Didn't know there was a West Forth. The projects would be like here they moved in the area and they settled right here in these apartment buildings but they wouldn't go any further. They wouldn't...they were afraid you know the people here wouldn't let them and they knew that.

D: When...how did they come in then...did they come...

C: They must have come from over there.

D: From the east?

C: It was just like a known thing okay you can stay here but don't come any further.

D: Do you think they just didn't sell the houses to them?

C: They wouldn't sell them.

D: They wouldn't sell them probably wouldn't. Do you think they didn't want to go over there did they want to or was it like they both knew?

C: I think they wanted to but you know you would see they had to go to some of the stores and stuff you know but for the most part they wouldn't venture into this area they wouldn't move into it. That's for sure.

D: We were talking about the bridges, now when they were closed were they forced to come in into the city?

C: At one time they had a riot probably maybe 1967.

D: Carl Stokes during that time.

C: Yeah and they marched right through this whole area then they marched then they went back nobody bothered them.

D: Did they bother anyone?

C: MmMm [no] they just marched but as time went on they got their way into there you know...

D: Was there a fear of them or were they just poor and they lived in that section or were they...

C: Yeah a matter of fact most of them are still there now there supposed to take them down.

D: The projects?

C: Yeah that's what I heard they're supposed to take them down.

D: Did you have any friends that were black?

C: Yeah I had one yeah his name was Jimmy Avery I liked him I hung around with him you know his and his brother were the first...Hey Barb...was it Willie and Jimmy were the first black ones or was it somebody else in Lincoln?

Wife: I think it was the Jarvis', Jarvis and their brothers I think it was the Averys.

C: You think it was them. Yeah it was like two brothers two brothers two blacks to go to Lincoln High School.

D: Uh ha what year was that?

C: 67, 68 and they were for the most part they were welcome uh ha they had they had no problems whatsoever you know they both played sports they were fantastic sports players but as far as anything racial anything like that nothing nobody bothered them. I remember when I was hanging around with that Jimmy I brought him over to the house you know and my parents of course being pretty much against blacks they made me sit on the back porch I couldn't sit on the front porch with um we were on the front porch my mother says go on and sit on the back porch I don't want the neighbors to see umm. Haha!

D: So the older generation was more...more they didn't want to communicate with them?

C: Right.

D: Kids were right away more open.

FIRST SIDE

C: You want the history on my girlfriends?

D: Hey any thing!

C: Just don't get in trouble that's all I say.

D: Um yeah so tell me about your school.

C: Went to Tremont Elementary School it was kind of a neat school to go to there was very close to my house you know you could go to school lunch time come home mom would fix a lunch for you you know and back to school again it's a big school for an elementary school it's big.

D: And grades...was that....

C: That was kindergarten to 7th grade. Cantius had a school too...is that tape going?

D: Yeah oh I'm sorry.

C: You flipped it already?

D: Yeah.

C: St. John Cantius Church that had a school and a lot of my friends went there. They had a bowling alley down below the church that was another one of our hang outs.

D: Was bowling popular?

C: Yeah pretty much yeah we never bowled though we just hung out.

D: So you went through all the school system you went through kindergarten to graduation.

C: Yeah kindergarten through six and then Lincoln High School went from 7 to 12th. So there was a pretty good mixture of age differences. You know like 7th grade you're only 13 years old and then it went all the way up to 12th grade which is like 17 18 years old. Everybody was mixed pretty much. But Lincoln High School was a fun school.

D: Why was that?

C: Hmmm?

D: Why?

C: Just had a lot of fun man a lot of goofing off a lot of trouble you know fun trouble didn't learn too much but had a lot of good times. Very bad in sports the school had very bad sports team. They couldn't win games for nothing.

D: Do you think everybody pretty much participated in the sports?

C: No it was just a handful.

D: Uhha.

C: I played sports until I think the 10th grade 10th grade was the last year I played sports, then I got caught smoking by the coach. Three times he told me I catch you three times you aren't playing more sports. He caught me three times.

D: Was smoking popular or was it...

C: Oh yeah.

D: Was it looked down upon the older people or did everybody smoke or was it just because you were a kid I mean how old did you have to be to smoke?

C: How old what?

D: How old did you have to be to smoke?

C: Any age. We just went to um see it up there?..the hundredth anniversary?...the school?

D: Oh wow cool!

C: They had a party for that.

D: Do you have any pictures that you had from before when you were a kid or anything like that?

C: I probably do. I've got some yeah you mean like something from Tremont or...

D: Yeah. You don't have to get it now.

C: I don't know if I've got anything. I'm sure I do if I look around.

D: Did pretty much everybody go to school then I mean did all your friends go to school or were there...some of them drop outs or...

C: Uh you didn't get too many drop outs. Uh quite a few guys quit school to go to the service you know and wound up in Viet Nam. Quite a few guys died you know a few friends I knew died over there. But nobody really...you didn't get too many that dropped out. If you couldn't make it in Lincoln High School then you couldn't make it. Haha! I know there were some some guys go to the service go to Viet Nam and then they'd let them back in the school to finish up. You know there were some guys like that. I'm trying to think of some more history for you that's what you're hear for, right?

D: Anything.

C: Anything that comes to my mind, right?

D: Yeah it's nothing. Um did you live during the highway? What about the schools, did they change in any way?

C: I don't think it affected the schools...well maybe a little bit...things like you know some of the people that moved see like their parents moved while they were still in high school and didn't graduate yet. You know some of the people that went to the suburbs. So what the people...what the students would have to do is say that they were living with their relative in the Tremont area so they could stay in the school...in Lincoln High School.

D: They would just lie, basically.

C: Yeah or they would tell my aunt lives at such and such that's were I'm living and tell the aunt if anybody calls tell then I'm living there. You...I think that's the only way it might of affected the schools and sometimes you just couldn't do that so you'd just move and you'd loose a friend you know somebody that you knew for a long time that you wanted to graduate with and everything you know.

D: What about when they built it, um did you know the people that lived in the path? Where they built 71?

C: Uh I really didn't know any body that I could think of. It was harder to walk to school.

D: Why?

C: Because there's this one cluster of houses, they were right about the West 14th Street. One cluster had side streets you know that you could walk to school and get to school using these side streets. Well when they got rid of that whole cluster you know you had to like, pheww, go all the way around and take a long, real long, route to get to school. Uh ha you know that did that to it.

D: The police, when you think of the services, were there police before the highway was built were they around more or did they have patrols or any thing like that?

C: Uh I don't ever remember ever seeing too much police in that area to begin with. But I don't think that would have changed anything. There's one section of the freeway I still don't understand...it just ends. Like goes nowhere.

D: Where's that?

C: It's right on, uh, on West 11th there's like a walking bridge. I don't know if I can see it on here or not. They don't show the bridge but it's like right here like West 11th and Auburn. And the

freeway, just if you look underneath, if you're walking across the bridge and you look down you'll see a freeway and it just...there's no cars that go there but it's a section of freeway that they did build and it just stops right there.

D: Is there an exit?

C: And I don't understand. No there's no exit, nothing. I think it was...like it reminds me of an appendix you know, it just comes out and ends...it doesn't go anywhere I don't know why they did that. I think it was some kind of mistake or something you know something in engineering that they screwed up.

D: Um the high ways were here...71...that is parallel to 14th you said...you didn't know anyone that lived in the path that got their house destroyed? Did you know anyone beyond that? Before like did you have any friends over in the other area?

C: Where the freeway took their house?

D: Um no like on the other side of the freeway. Did you know people on the other side?

C: I'm not sure. You're losing me. I'm not...

D: Like here's the highway you know, there's houses on the other side of the highway that weren't destroyed and I don't know if they are necessarily part of Tremont, but I'm sure they were connected by streets...by houses and stuff.

C: Oh okay.

D: So I'm asking if you knew...if you knew the people over here?

C: No.

D: So is it mostly contained from 14th and in that you knew everybody? So you just...it wasn't that big of a deal. This here that was destroyed for you,.

C: No, no it was that other section on 14th off of 14th.

D: Where did most of your friends live?

C: All over the place they were scattered everybody was kind of scattered. Or another place to too it's called Maric House. It's a...it's like another recreation type place...recreation center. That was another place we went to. They had like basketball. They had you know weights. They had boxing things like that and I was just...I went in that place a couple years ago and the place is immaculate...still looks the same. Yeah they used to have dances in there they had dances. Print shop that's a uh coffee house now.

D: What was it before?

C: A print shop. It was on the corner of Kennelworth and 11th. It's like the neighborhood print shop. Haha you needed anything printed you know that's where you went. A lot of the places now they took and redid...made restaurants and stuff out of and like that.

D: When did they start redoing these places?

C: I don't know...10 years ago but I can...like every now and then I take a ride in the neighborhood you know just to reminisce a little bit and I can like tell you what the places used to be. You know I don't know if you heard of Treehouse down there. It's like a bar. It's pretty popular place. And uh it used to be an old meat market. You know my mother used to get her Easter kielbasa there. Now its a bar. A lot of little places like that they're redoing.

D: Did the people that lived there work there pretty much or they work....

C: No most of the people worked elsewhere except for the good the proprietors that had, you know, like a clothing store or a hardware store...they probably the lived there. But....

D: Where did you parents work for?

C: My father worked for Republic Steel and my mother she didn't work. But he could take his car to work or a lot of times he took a bus you know.

D: Did he talk about his work a lot or do you know any thing about that?

C: He was a treasurer of the union. He didn't talk about his work that much but I know he was treasurer of the union.

D: Um talk about girls. We could talk about dating if you want.

C: Haha!

D: Where'd you guys go?

C: Clark Field. There was a...they built a uh...they built a football field down there. It was just... it was just nothing. It was an open area, and they built a football field with stands then stuff like that. They had huge parking lot and that's were we'd go. Hey, Barb, did I ever take you to Clark Field?

Wife: No.

C: No hahaha.

D: Was...you're saying a lot of people got married...got married to each other in the community, so I'm taking that as probably when you dated did everybody knew everybody? So was it...what was dating like? Was it like you had a girlfriend, you went steady or or did you just...

C: Yeah that was it. You had a girlfriend, you went steady, then after high school you know you stayed with her and you got married. Do kids date now?

D: Yeah.

C: Yeah ha that's not old fashioned any more still!

D: You still get people trying not to get married I think.

C: Haha!

D: So it was right out of high school basically?

C: Yeah back then it was...yeah. I got married when I was 21 when I met my wife...lets see...1971. We got married in 73. Most of the dating that did go on was high school sweethearts you know.

D: Did your parents want you to go out and get married? Was that an objective?

C: Yeah.

D: So if you didn't have a girlfriend they were kind of...did they try to push you?

C: Yeah.

D: "How come you're not dating"... "people will talk."

C: I could tell you other dating experiences but my wife's in the next room so...

Wife: Haha! Do you want me to go upstairs?

C: Haha! Trying to think of something else for you...

D: Did you date the people that went to the same churches? Or anything like that? Was it, um or was it just people in your school or was it just people you knew?

C: People in school...mainly in school.

D: Did it matter what religious affiliation they had?

C: No, naah. I know like year...you know years back parents used to look...be big on that you know about dating other religions and stuff like that but it didn't matter.

D: What happens after high school? Um, did so...pretty much everyone gets married or tries to get married and if they don't what happens?

C: Then they are the lucky ones!

D: Did uh you work then? In Tremont...did you work?

C: Oh did I do any work in Tremont?

D: When you lived there did you have a job?

C: Oh yeah. Yeah. I'm trying to think...did I do anything in Tremont? I didn't work at the pool. I don't think I set up bowling pins. Did you ever see those things?

D: What's that?

C: The ones you got to set up...you know like...have you been bowling? Well you know how the automatic pin setter? Well before that, somebody would sit behind the pins and when the pins were knocked over they'd gather up the pins and put them back in the slots. And I did that over an old church called Pilgrim on uh West 14th. They had only 3 lanes.

D: How old were you then?

C: Probably about 12.

D: Was it normal for kids to have a job? Like how young would you be when you got a job? Your first job...

Wife: You had a paper route.

C: That's right. I had a paper route. Tremont Press. You probably never heard of that. They used to have two newspapers. The Tremont Plain Dealer...that was a morning paper, then they had a Tremont Press that came out at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and that's the one I delivered.

D: That was in the Tremont area?

C: Mmhmm.

D: And how old were you then?

C: I had that Press route from the time I was ten to the time I was fifteen.

D: And how much did you get paid?

C: Four or five bucks a week...that's all you made

D: What about the set up the pins?

C: That was tips.

D: Uh ha.

C: The guys...when they got done bowling, you know, at the end of the evening they would tip the pin setter. You know, usually it was only fifty cents or something like that which was, you know, for back then was ok, you know. It bought my pop and my candy and my comic books.

D: Right.

C: Yeah, I forgot about that.

D: A lot of kids your age have jobs then...I mean did they try to get a job or was that...

C: It seemed like everyone wanted to work and make some money. They had Press Routes, Plain Dealer routes. You could work at Lincoln pool in the summer, you know. You could do various duties there...make money. You could be a foot checker.

D: Foot checker?

C: Before you go in to swim you'd have to get your feet checked and you put your foot in this little wooden thing and spread your toes. They were looking for athletes' foot. So there was a person that stood there and looked at your toes. To check for athletes' foot. Haha! You could do that for a couple bucks a day.

D: Was it easy to get a job then?

C: Yeah, mmhmm.

Wife: How about the hotel?

C: Yeah, I used to be a busboy at a hotel too.

D: Was that in Tremont?

C: No.

D: How old were you?

C: 15 I think. I gave up my Press route.

D: What did you do?

C: Oh, busboy...bussing dishes and stuff. There weren't a whole lot of jobs in Tremont. I mean not in that particular area, you know you had to own something you know like a drug store or a corner delicatessen or something like that, there wasn't too many jobs.

D: You said your dad was in the steel industry. Your friends parents...were they in the steel industry or what kind of jobs did they have or any thing like that?

C: Uh quite a few of them were steel, you know, because the steel mills... that was the place to work, you know. You could always get a job in the steel mill so a lot of my friends fathers did work in the steel mill.

D: Did women work a lot or...

C: Hmm mm, no. Some but not too many...a lot of drunk people.

D: Where? In Tremont?

C: Look at all the bars!

D: Right.

C: You know, quite a few of my friends' fathers...just like alcoholics.

D: So was that a big problem there or was it just kind of overlooked?

C: It was just overlooked, you know. It seemed to me almost like a common thing, you know, like people just drank a lot in that neighborhood. They drank.

D: Was it any particular group of people or was...

C: I'd say not a particular group. I would just say, you know, just...I mean it was people you knew, you know, I mean I had a brother...is he...is he an alcoholic. Man, he drank and it seemed it seemed like even now a lot of guys that drank when we were in high school, you know, a lot of them still are drunks. And I think that neighborhood had a lot something to do with that. I think because of all the bars that were in that neighborhood you could walk to any corner and walk in any bar in that neighborhood on a corner.

D: Was it cheap too?

C: Yeah. They had a lot of problems. A lot of problems with people drinking in that neighborhood... like I say a lot of my friends when I was a kid and stuff I can remember seeing the father... usually it was the father...it seemed like, you know, drunk all the time...drunk and yelling at the kids.

D: So the bar was almost a family place to go? It was kind of not because, I mean...

C: No, it was still family I think. It was a family place to go. You had to watch which bar you went into, you know, as a family because some bars were just for drunks and some were family oriented. You know, but...

D: Do you remember which ones were which?

C: I would say Dempsey's was family. Post 577 was family. Polowsky Post 30 was family. Helen's Bar...drunks. Uh, Polt's Bar...drunks. Limko's, I think, family. Friendly Bar. Drunks. I used to get served there when I was fifteen. The lady that owned it...Ukrainian lady...plus the kid, her son, we knew, um, we were good friends with him. We'd go in the bar and she'd serve us in the back room. When we were 15...serve us liquor! That was definitely a drunk bar.

D: But it wasn't unsafe...

C: It was still safe, yeah. They used to have a lot of little shops like ethnic shops that sold nothing but ethnic typed goods, you know, like certain clothing and certain glassware and maybe even certain foods, you know just for that particular, you know, Polish, Ukrainian, Greek. They used to have little shops like that around.

D: Everybody shopped at them so it wasn't, er, was it separatist?...was a Polish person more apt to shop at a Polish store?

C: Oh yeah.

D: Do you think it was different between the older people and the younger people? Like, if you were younger, were you more apt to shop maybe at a different...like if you weren't Polish would you shop at a Polish place sometimes? Was there any search for diversity or anything like that? Or did you just stick to what you parents did?

C: Probably just stick to what your parents did. But being younger like me I wouldn't even go in there. Haha you know I don't want a Polish shirt...haha! But, those where those were kind of neat little shops.