

Tremont Oral History Project

Interview With Elizabeth Hallal
Interviewed by Charles A. McCandlish
Parma Community Library, Parma, Ohio
3/1/03 1:30-2:30PM

Charles McCandlish- Alright, what is your name and can you spell it for me, please.

Elizabeth Hallal-My name is Elizabeth Hallal. H-A-L-L-A-L.

CM- When did your parents move to Tremont?

EH- [Pause] Well in nineteen nineteen I believe, it was.

CM-Okay. And where did they move here from?

EH-My mother moved from Pennsylvania and my father moved from Boston I believe. He came from Russia and lived in Boston for awhile. And then he settled in Tremont.

CM-So they migrated.

EH-Right.

CM-Okay, very good. So what were their names? And can you spell them for me?

EH-My mother's name was Susan Fantasky, F-A-N-T-A-S-K-Y. And my father's name was Nicholas Andrew Sechko, S-E-C-H-K-O.

CM-What languages did they speak?

EH-My mother was born here so she spoke English. And my father spoke Russian.

CM-Do you speak any other languages?

EH-No I don't.

CM-Neither do I.

EH-I wish I did.

CM-Where did you live when you were growing up in Tremont? What was the address?

EH-My address was eight twenty four Clarence Court.

CM-Oh, Clarence Court. I actually interviewed another guy and he told me about Clarence

Court. I couldn't find it on any map.

EH-It isn't on any map. That's because it was demolished to make way for four ninety.

CM. Okay, what year was that in?

EH-The year that I lived there?

CM-The year that you lived there and the year it was demolished.

EH-Okay, I lived there from the time I was. I lived there for seventeen years. I don't know when it was demolished really. When they made four ninety so, I don't know the year.

CM-What was the ethnic makeup of the block you lived on?

EH-It was one street. No block. The ethnic was Russian, Ukrainian, Slovak, Polish, and German. I think that was about it.

CM-So it was a mixture of people?

EH-Quite a mixture yes.

CM-How many siblings did you have?

EH-I had two siblings. Two sisters.

CM-And what were their names?

EH-Margaret and Olga

CM-What were your family sleeping arrangements? Did you share a room?

EH-I slept with older sister Olga. Of course my mother and father had a bedroom. And then my younger sister came later, so she slept in my parent's room when she was little. And then my grand father also lived with us. So he had a room.

CM-What were some of your childhood memories?

EH-So many.

CM-Go ahead.

EH-Well childhood memories. Oh I remember that I went to Tremont school. I loved to read I was in the summer reading program there. And I used to go to Lincoln Park and partake in the activities there in the summertime. And we were very, very, poor, so we used to go to movies once a week to Jennings theater. Saturday was the matinee, so we went there. On Sunday we

went to the Church. My mother and father did not go to church, so we used to visit the different churches in the area. There were a lot of churches in the area. So that's what we did mainly.

CM-Where did you play when you were a child?

EH-I played in the field that was below Clarence Court, there was a huge field and it extended all the way to the Clark Avenue Bridge. In the summertime we used to play in the field. In the wintertime we used to flood the field and ice-skate down there. So it was really, really, unique living on Clarence Court. Because it was like one big family. We all knew each other and---

CM-What was it like? Houses?

EH-It was a hill. It extended from Fruit Avenue down the hill, then there was one hill, then there was another hill that went down further. And on the first hill, the houses were on both sides. On the lower hill, the houses were on one side and faced the field. They used to call the field Headlow Farms. And then beyond that area there was another group of houses on both sides. And then there was another hill going up. So it was sort of secluded.

CM-Where did you go to elementary school?

EH-I went to Tremont school.

CM-How many grades did it have in it?

EH-We had eight grades. From kindergarten through eighth grade.

CM-So it was kind of like today?

EH-Kind of, but it was a really---, I know they demolished part of Tremont school. The old school was in three sections. And there was a new section, and there was an old section. The old section must have been built in the eighteen hundreds. And then beyond that there was the junior high. We had eight, nine years practically there so.

CM-How many kids were in school with you there, any idea, was there a lot?

EH-No, no, there wasn't because, there wasn't a lot of kids in there, I would say twenty-five in a class. You know. It was pretty good. But we had a pretty good time there.

CM-Where did you go to high school?

EH-I went to Lincoln high school? From the ninth grade to the---, I graduated in nineteen forty-three.

CM-Did you play organized sports when you were in high school?

EH-I was a cheerleader.

CM-Football or---?

EH-Football cheerleader and basketball. We had no varsity cheerleaders in the senate at that time, of the group of schools so the only girls that were cheerleaders at that time.

CM-Did you travel with the team?

EH-We had to provide our own transportation, it didn't go like. We didn't go out of town we went to West Tech and West High.

CM-Inner-city?

EH-Yes inner city, right.

CM-Did the football team have their own transportation?

EH-Yes, they did. They had their own transportation but we, we didn't rate I guess.

CM-What were some of your memories of Tremont during the Great Depression? Or things you've heard.

EH-Of Tremont Area. Okay during the Great Depression, my father didn't work for two years. So my mother did house keeping during that time. And we were, we had assistance from the county. It was really bad. We had to, we had to be interviewed for assistance, and then we had, they didn't have food stamps or anything like that but they had centralized stores that we could go and get sugar and flour and they had the basic staples. And then every month a caseworker would come to the house and kind of inspect to see if we had anything unusual, or you know. But it was kind of bad.

CM-Were a lot of people out of work?

EH-Allot of people were out of work and then we ate a lot of soup. And we didn't have a really good, fabulous diet. So it was not real pleasant. But I was just a kid, so you know, it didn't really phase me you know.

CM-Where did your parents work?

EH-My dad worked for White Sewing Machine Company. As a cabinetmaker. And my mother worked for various people in Lakewood. Doing laundry and ironing and taking care of the house. So her one employer was a Mrs. Kramer. They owned a lumber company and she mainly worked for them.

CM-Did your father work close to home?

EH-Yes, he worked on Scranton Road. Most of the men who worked in that neighborhood

worked, on Scranton Road there was a lot of factories. They all had to walk because we didn't have cars. So they had to walk. They would take their lunch pails with them. No fast foods or anything like that. They had to take their lunches. Mostly the factories were down there, or they worked in the steel mills. You know Otis Steel, whatever they call it now but---

CM-Where did you and your parents go to church when you were growing up?

EH-My parents, my mother went to church, my father did not go to church. He originally belonged to St. Theodosius, the Orthodox church. And then my mother went to Our Lady Of Mercy. That's on West Eleventh Street, and that's where we went to church. Our Lady Of Mercy my mother and my father, of course St. Theodosius.

CM-Did you go to church with your neighbors?

EH-Sometimes. We went to the Polish churches, and the Russian churches. For different times of year, like for Easter we'd go to St. Theodosius. So we were growing up with a lot of different backgrounds as far as religion is concerned.

CM-What language was church service spoken in?

EH-In Our Lady Of Mercy they spoke in Slovak. In St. Theodosius of course Russian. Once in a while we'd go to the Polish church, and sometimes they'd have it in English and in Polish. We'd go to Holy Spirit church down there and they spoke mostly in Ukrainian. And Pilgrim church they spoke in English. And St. Augustines they spoke in English. So that's what most of the background was.

CM-What were some of the social places that you and your parents visited?

EH-Social places. They had the Merrick House. We'd go to there, and then we used to visit the bathhouse. They had different programs there we used to ice skate behind the bathhouse. Socially my father belonged to the Ukrainian Labor Temple there. He was a secretary for the club there so ever once in awhile they'd have picnics, or dances. And we'd go to dances at Lemko Hall, and that was about it.

CM-Were did you and your parents grocery shop?

EH-We had different stores, we didn't have supermarkets so we'd have to go to the butcher and to the dairy and to the various stores. They were located on Starkweather and Professor Street. And the bakery was on Auburn, Auburn Bakery on Auburn Avenue. The drug store was on Professor so we had all individual stores. Not like now you go one stop shopping, we didn't have that.

CM-Were did or where do you work?

EH-I worked for Higbees at Parma Town for twenty years but I'm retired now. I worked for the Navy Department during the war. For the bureau of Supplies and Accounts downtown. For five

years I worked with them.

CM-What was Tremont like during World War II?

EH-Well during World War II of course everything was rationed. Gas was rationed, food was rationed, and shoes were rationed. We had stamp books, and we had tokens for various things like sugar. We saved our fats from bacon or any thing and gave it to the war effort. Saved our tin cans and they'd collect that for the war effort. And gasoline was a big thing you know. Of course not that many people in that area had cars. But it was pretty bad. We could buy nylons they didn't have nylons so, if they had some nylons we'd have to stand in line for it. And they men if they wanted to smoke they'd have to stand in line for cigarettes. It was pretty bare, so.

CM-You said a lot of people did not have cars. Did they take public transportation?

EH-Right, right.

CM-Were there busses or---?

EH-We had streetcars, and then later on they had busses. And that was our mode of transportation. I don't know how we got around anywhere because, [Laughter] we went to a lot of places but. I was just thinking about that the other day how did we get around to all these places. You know, like to the West Side Market. Places you couldn't walk to, but we did allot of walking believe me. Walking up that hill every day was a chore, so [Laughter] it sounds funny doesn't it.

CM-You got to know a lot about walking, you walked a lot. I wanted to go back to Clarence Court for a minute; do you remember what year you moved out of Clarence Court?

EH-Yes, we moved out of Clarence Court in nineteen forty-three.

CM-Nineteen forty-three, so it was the year you graduated?

EH-Yes we bought a house on West Fifteenth Street. And that was about two blocks away from Lincoln high school so that was really great because from Clarence Court to Lincoln was quite a walk. So it was a luxury. [Laughter]

CM-Right so the people on Clarence Court they were bought out by the government? Their houses, to put in four ninety?

EH-Yes, I believe so. I don't know too much, the people that bought our house, were neighbors of ours. Siblings of neighbors of ours and they bought our house and then they bought out Clarence Court. They moved to Fruit Avenue, which was on top of the hill. So I guess they were bought up by the government, I don't know too much about that. I was sorry to see it go, because it was so different.

CM-What are some of your memories of the Innerbelt construction project?

EH-Not too much. I know that they took our house for four ninety there. And then they also took our house on West Fifteenth Street that we bought. And then we moved up to Library Avenue. So I don't know too much about the construction but I was kind of sad to see it all cut up like that.

CM-The government bought your house on West Fifteenth Street?

EH-I believe so, yes.

CM-Where the people upset about it or---?

EH-Oh yeah sure, because housing was---. A lot of those people didn't have a lot of money to buy better houses. So a lot of them were displaced, so I think they were upset. I know when we found out that Clarence Court was bought up we were kind of upset. Even though we didn't live there.

CM-What was it like when some of the bridges were out? The Abbey Road Bridge? The Clark bridge?

EH-I don't recall too much. I remember the Abbey Road Bridge because we did use to walk to the market, across Abbey Road Bridge to get to the West Side Market. So, and there was also, I don't know if there was another bridge that went over to the downtown area, I can't recall but, I was real young then. We used to walk the Abbey Road Bridge when it was demolished. Of course the people had to go through---, I'll tell you how they'd go. They'd go through Auburn, and then they'd go down West Twelfth Fifth Street all the way to the market. That was, probably they took streetcar or bus. It was a little of an inconvenience, to say the least.

CM-Why did they change the area that use to be named Lincoln Heights, why did they change it to the name Tremont?

EH-I believe it was named after somebody whose name was Tremont. But I would have to go onto the internet to find that out. [Laughter] I really don't know. It was a lot of those streets in Tremont were named after---, they were going to build a university there. So the streets were named; Professor, College, Literary, after and University. After, the university that was supposed to be built there. And the other streets, I believe were named after people. That settled first there.

CM-How has the neighborhood changed?

EH-Down in Tremont?

CM-Yeah.

EH-Well I haven't---, I moved away quite a long time ago, but we go through there all the time. When we cut from---, I have a daughter that lives in Richmond Heights. So we cut through the Tremont area. How has it changed? They took our theater out of there. To make way for one of

the freeways. Most of---, a lot of like the Ukrainian National Home is all boarded up. And there is---, Pelton Place assisted living was an apartment. And a friend of mine owned the apartments prior to selling them to the nursing home. So that's a nursing home now. And of course Lincoln Bathhouse is now condos. We went to visit there and the condos are really expensive. They are in the two hundred fifty thousand-dollar range. Of course there is no more Clarence Court. And the two main streets leading from the church, St. Theodosius are blocked off. I don't know if there are any houses down there any longer. And then they had a project, for low-income people on West Seventh Street, and that was all boarded up for years and now I think they have some people living there. But it's very depressed.

CM-That's the Valley View Apartments?

EH-Right.

CM-Who originally lived in there?

EH-In the Valley View Apartments?

CM-Yeah.

EH-People who had real low income. And later on---, who ever was very, very poor, moved down there. The apartments when they were first built were nice. I had a girlfriend who lived down there and I visited. But like with any projects, like that, they get trashed and---so.

CM-Did any of your family stay in Tremont?

EH-No, no.

CM-No, your parents moved out?

EH-Well my parents moved to, up---. We had a---. We were displaced in two places. So we lived on Library, and then I was married and. And then moved out of my parents' home you know. I moved into my husbands' families, they had a store on West Twenty Fifth and Sakic and I lived there for ten years. Then we moved to Parma.

CM-When were you married?

EH-In nineteen forty-seven.

CM-Nineteen forty-seven, did you have any children?

EH-I have, I had four children but one passed away. I have three children, two daughters and a son. And eight grand children. [Laughter]

CM-Wow. What was Tremont like when Carl Stokes was elected Mayor of Cleveland, 1967?

EH-I don't remember anything about Carl Stokes being elected or anything like that. I really didn't keep up with, the history of that area, later you know. When you move out away from somewhere you forget about it.

CM-Tell me more about your high school, what was your high school like?

EH-Well we had ninth grade through twelfth grade. We changed classes like any high school. We had a top-notch football team. We won the senate in two or three years. And we had allot of clubs. I belonged to the National Honor Society. Cheerleaders and choir, we had and excellent choir, a very good choir teacher. We had allot of dances up at the YMCA on Franklin.

CM-What type of classes did you take in high school?

EH-I took a commercial class. Took short hand, typing, and bookkeeping. Of course you know history, English, all the required subjects. So. [Pause]
They had a piece in the Plain Dealer about a month ago about a painting that hung in the Jefferson Library. And as a child I loved that painting so much because it was the field that I played on. It was right below our Clarence Court. And its the only picture I have actually of the field and Clarence Court. I really loved that painting and---. I haven't been down to Jefferson branch in years and I wondered, "where is that painting?" So I, low and behold, here it was in the Plain Dealer magazine section, a picture of the painting. And they sent it to Oberlin College and had it restored. And then they rededicated---, their going to rededicate it in April. At the Jefferson branch. So I know the painting is there. So I wrote a letter to the Plain Dealer and they published my letter. In yesterdays Plain Dealer.

CM-Or really?

EH-In the magazine section. About the painting. Of course the man that designed the library there, which was like my second home, well he's the one that painted the painting. And that's the only picture I have of Clarence Court. So you could see what it looked like.

CM-That's at Jefferson Library?

EH-Yes, at Jefferson Library.

CM-I'll have to go check it out.

EH-Yeah I'll have to go check it out too.

CM-Can you describe for me what dating was like when you were a teenager?

EH-Okay my mother kind of strict with us so---, we didn't really, my sister dated more than I did. But when I was sixteen we used to go in groups to parties, to wiener roasts, and hayrides and things like that. And then when I was like seventeen I was a senior, so I started dating this fella. Well I married him. [Laughter] So that's unusual huh. I went to school with him, and so we. We used to go out we use to go downtown to the movies. Take the streetcar or bus down there. One

time I remember one really special we went to College Inn. That was like a teenage club across from where Cleveland State is now. Fenn College was there so they called that College Inn. I thought that was really neat, you know. We'd go to the movies and stuff like that.

CM-Was your husband from Tremont?

EH-He lived on West Twenty Fifth Street. I don't know if you would call that Tremont. I don't think so.

CM-I guess it depends on who you talk to.

EH-Yeah.

CM-Where was your reception at?

EH-My reception was in Tremont at the Ukrainian Labor Temple. Its on the corner of West Tenth and Auburn. I believe it's an artist's studio now or something like that.

CM-What was the Ukrainian Labor Temple, what did you do there?

EH-Well it was like mostly from, mostly the people who belonged there were Russian. And it was like a social club. And I think there were a lot of shady things about it. I think, it had a lot to do with socialism and the communism. I remember my father was investigated for that. Off the record.[Laughter] But they didn't find anything about it. My father had more socialistic viewpoints on stuff. He was born in Russia so you have to realize that he had to get out of Russia when the revolution started. So he was more, sympathetic toward the revolutionaries. Because the country was so born and the aristocratics were so rich. I guess that was the time for a change. We didn't share my father's viewpoints.

CM-Where did he come from in Russia?

EH-About eighty miles from Minsk in Belarus. It was called Novgoroda. He when my mother died in nineteen sixty-five we urged him to go visit his family there. Because he had never been back. So he went, and when he came back he said, "God bless America, nothing was like the United States," so he changed his viewpoint.

CM-You said he was being investigated, who was investigating him?

EH-The federal government. For you know, I guess, Bolshevik activity. I really don't remember. I remember that he used to subscribe to this paper called the Russki Golas. And so they confiscated all the papers I remember that. I think they didn't want to talk about it to us, because we were pretty young then. They didn't want to---. My father changed his viewpoints. Because during the war I remember, you know I worked for the federal government. For the Navy Department so we had to be finger printed and every thing else so they did a through check on all of us. I guess it's weird alright.

CM-How did you get the job with the Navy Department?

EH-I took a civil service test in high school. I qualified for a clerk typist job there, and so I was assigned to a typist pool. And then later on I was in charge of all the dispersing officers in the Navy there. In the Navy they sent all their pay records to us and we dispersed them.

CM-How long did you work there?

EH-Five years.

CM-Five years and that was in Cleveland?

EH-That was in Cleveland downtown on West Twelfth and Euclid. In the old building, it use to be the Higbee building actually and then later they sold it to the government. And then later on we worked down the street. Above the bowling alley in the garage. It was kind of meek, it was different.

CM-You were like a secret agent.

EH-No well we had a wear badges and you know they had pictures all over the place. That had Uncle Sam with his finger on his mouth. You couldn't divulge any secrets. We had Navy personal working with us. We had the Waves and Navy men working with us. We use to visit the Waves; they had a building that they housed them in. We used to have a lot of fun with them, we'd eat with them once in awhile, it was kinda different.

CM-Secrecy was a big thing then?

EH-Right, right.

CM-What did they do to ensure it? Did they have classes or training?

EH-Well they use to send periodicals around, you know. Uncle Sam is watching you. Like Big Brother is watching you. When we checked in had to show our I D's, you know picture I D's. When we went out to lunch we had to show it when we came back from lunch we had to show it. We worked six days a week. Sunday was the only day we had off. It was kind of rough. We worked from eight o'clock until five every day. So we practically lived there.

CM-Did you wear a uniform?

EH-No, we didn't wear a uniform, but ever once and a while we'd go to the Waves quarters and they would want to wear our cloths, and we would change into their cloths. [Laughs] Just for the fun of it.

CM-This takes us back to Tremont. Can you tell me more about Lincoln Park?

EH-Yes, Lincoln Park. When I was twelve years old my dad bought me a bike. I use to go bike

riding there they use have a lot of paths and everything. They had a large gazebo, a really large gazebo and they use to have band concerts there on Sunday people in the neighborhood would come and enjoy themselves. And then they had little classes in dramatics, and pin pong, and stuff like that. Of course there use to be a hedge all along the park that was like a spire hedge that was real large. So we use to play hide and seek there. In the center they had a large pond, and they would fill it with water. In the summer the little kids would go in and splash around in there. So--

CM-In the pond?

EH-In the pond, yeah. It was---

CM-It was a pond it wasn't a fountain?

EH-No, no, it was a pond. It was not very deep. There was not a lot of water in there you know. But that was their entertainment. Because they didn't have backyard pools or anything like that. And to go swimming we had to go all the way to Brookside Park. So that was quite a hike down there. I use to ride my bike down there.

CM-Can you tell me more about the Lincoln Bathhouse?

EH-Lincoln Bathhouse we used to take tap dancing lessons there. A lot of the people didn't have facilities to take a bath in their house. In fact we didn't. We had a toilet, in a really cold room in the back of the house. But we had to take a bath in a galvanized tub. Once a week in the kitchen. So it sounds funny I know, but the people in the neighborhood if they wanted to take a shower, they would take their soap and towel and go to the bathhouse and take a shower.

CM-Was it free?

EH-Yeah it was free. I never went and took a shower there. Because---, I don't know we never did. I believe my father might have gone there. We would take our own little soaps and towel; they would and go take a shower. The bathhouse was really nice. You know it was kept up nice, it was clean and everything, so.

CM-Was there a doctors office in there or a clinic?

EH-No the doctor's offices' were in different buildings. The doctor we went to was upstairs from, like a two-floor house. On West Fourteenth Street. The doctor's name was Dr. Kamechic, Kamechic I believe. Of course we didn't go like the kids go now a days. Their parents go for shots and everything else. And if we were sick we would go to the nurse in school. Miss. Alice in Tremont. She had her own dispensary there. If we were sick we would get a note. Take this to your parents, you know, they we would go to the doctor and get a shot if we needed it or whatever we needed. But we didn't get a lot of---. I don't remember going to the doctor that much. We did all home remedies, [Laughs] you know.

CM-I don't know if you were old enough when you were there but what were some of the bars

you went to?

EH-I never went to a bar but I remember the men use to work in the factories and then they would stop at Hotz Bar. On the corner of West Tenth and Starkweather. I don't know I think it's still there. And Dempsy's which is next to the bathhouse that's about the only two bars I remember. Hotz and Dempsy's. Of course we never went into the bar. The men use to go the women didn't go to bars. But I understand they have a lot of nice restaurants down there now. In fact the one restaurant Miracles is next to the church I use to go to. It use to be a photographers studio.

CM-Things has changed throughout the years?

EH-Right, right.

CM-What was the West Side Market like?

EH-Open air no enclosed area. I don't recall when they built the new part where the indoor vendors are now. But I remember we use to go to the out door vendors. It is primarily the same as it was then. Different farmers would bring their produce and---. No now I believe that the new part was there because my mother go on Easter time and get horseradish. Then she would make horseradish with beets, for Easter, really hot. So she would always go there for the horseradish.

CM-When did you move out of Tremont and why?

EH-People were migrating out of that area, especially Clarence Court. My sister and I were both working then it was during the war. We were able to help pay for a better house. So at the time we sold our house on Clarence Court for two thousand dollars. Then the house on West Fifteenth Street we sold it for four thousand five hundred. We bought our house on Library for seventy eight hundred. So it might seem like a piddley amount but that was---, we just upgraded. So that's why we moved out.

CM-Did a lot of people do the same thing?

EH-Oh yeah. A lot of our neighbors moved out before we did. They moved to Parma, and to Brooklyn, and so my mother said, "I guess it is time." Because we were both going to graduate, my sister graduated already and then I graduated in forty three so it was time to get out of there.

CM-Time to move on to something new. What was high school like when you graduated?

EH-Okay, we graduated in nineteen forty-three in June. When we graduated we had a real elaborate pageant for South America, at the Cleveland Public Hall. It took about three or four hours for that pageant. I still have the program from it. Our vice-principal was very big on South America. So we had the tribute to the flags of South America and then the upper classmen who were like valedictorian and like different speakers gave a presentation about the different countries. The president of our class Karl Mackey he became the director of the Lakewood Little Theatre. So he was quite prominent in school and he was a really good speaker he kind of manipulated all of this for the South America. Of course graduation, we had the prom. We

couldn't have a dinner because it was during the war and we had no food stamps for it. So we didn't have dinner, but we had a prom dance. On the top of the Union Commerce Building, we had a band, and we had a formal and everything. It was really nice. So that was graduation, we had yearbooks; I still have my yearbook. Of course last year Lincoln had a huge, huge reunion, for one hundred years of Lincoln high school. At the new Avalon Party Center. I got a print out on it, I didn't go but a lot of my classmates went and they told me about it. We have reunions every once and a while so---

CM-Do you keep in touch with people?

EH-Yes in fact I just went to a luncheon with some of my old friends, girl friends I had in Lincoln. It is nice to see what happened to all of them.

CM-What kind of foods did you eat when you were growing up?

EH-A lot of soup. My mother use to make ethnic dishes like borsch, and stuffed cabbage, perogi, meatloaf, and of course chicken was just relegated to Sunday. So that was a special treat. Mainly that is what we ate. Stew, a lot of pot stuff you know.

CM-Alright thank you very much it has been a pleasure.

EH-Yes Charles and your going to have it on a web site you said?

CM-Yes.

EH-Do you have an address for it?

[Tape stops interview ends.]