



Interviewee: **Margaret Regina White**

Interviewee Number: **39**

Interviewers: **Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella**

**& Tony Buba**

Date of Interview: **June 4, 2008**

**If you could start off by giving your name –**

Okay, Margaret Regina White.

**Now when we refer to you on this CD, do you want us to call you Margaret Regina White or do you want us to call you Regina White?**

No, the full name. But you can, like somebody from Braddock, they know me as Jean. No, I agree. So you're allowed to use your nickname, is it?

**Yeah, I think. Okay? Well, let's see: today is Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008. And we're interviewing Margaret Regina White. Margaret, Jean, Regina, you, we want you to tell us where you're from, where you grew up and a little bit about your family.**

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1929 and was raised in Braddock. I attended St. Brendan's and St. Thomas High School and my mother was from Scottsdale, PA, Mary Cecelia Hughes. My dad was Cyril S. White of New York City. Born and raised. He was a policeman in Braddock. I graduated in 1947, St. Thomas High School, and I attended nursing training, Rosalia Hospital, a foundling home. Graduated in 1950. I worked at Pittsburgh Hospital for a year, Montefiore Hospital for three-and-a-half years, part-time, went to Magee Hospital for six months, Homestead Hospital for a year, private duty and a teacher in Swissvale, taught in a nursery.

I spent thirty-five years at the Juvenile Court as a nurse. I retired in 1989.

**How was that experience at Juvenile Court?**

Nothing like it. I had responsibilities. I took care of my elderly aunt, Ellen M. Hughes, my mother's sister. Medical treatment daily, avoid the amputation of her leg, and took care of an old neighbor, ninety-year-old. Worked sixteen hours, seven days a week.

**Any brothers and sisters?**

I had one brother, who was in the Navy and the Marines, Peter.

**Is he older or younger than you?**

Older.

**So you've had all this work experience and how did you hear about our project?**

Well, the editor of the Senior News is a friend of mine, best friend, whatever that means, and I just happened to pick up that magazine and that's where I seen it. I checked the next issue, I didn't see it, so...

**So you gave us a call then?**

Yes. And then I made the trip.

**Made the trip from Braddock?**

No, I came from Pittsburgh. I came down here to make sure that I was, you know.....

**Is there anybody in your family with a disability?**

Well, my elderly aunt, with a varicose ulcer, that was a possibility, in like, perhaps 1946. Amputation, and it was prevented, and buried her in 1974 with her leg. Daily treatments.

**I'm curious about the Juvenile Court. A nurse at Juvenile Court?**

Well, I started out on Forbes Avenue, 1957. Then I went to Schuman Center.

**Oh, at Schuman Center? Okay.**

Yes, I like to relate it as Juvenile Court.

Well, I started out with a little one stealing jelly beans and ended up with murder. Worked with them.

**Did you have to be tough on them?**

We had to be strict. You can't go back. And I'm fair. I retired in 1989. I can get on the bus, I can go here and there. "Hey, Miss White," and they respect me, and I was Miss White. And that I like. Cause I went to bat for them, not for higher-ups. And I couldn't tell you how many notes were under Social Service's door, believe me, for help. Cause I single person that needs help. I go to the Red Door, I'm working on other cases, wanted to be a nun or a social worker, didn't get to be either.

**Well, a nurse. You were sort of a social worker in that setting.**

I promised when I retired that I would do one good thing each day. Somebody on the bus or anywhere, I try to do it. I get involved, let's put it that way.

**Do you? What are you involved in?**

Anything. Social Workers and the downtown, the Red Door, somebody's at their post, I take a sandwich to them. I look out. There are cases I'm looking at now. People or animals, you know? A little squirrel, I have a friend. When I get the bus he looks for me, looks for my window, tries to. I care for people, the elderly and the animals. The rest can like, fend for yourself.

**So tell me what else you've been doing since you retired.**

Well, different things, different short trips, you know, back and forth. Visit friends. Leisure life. I couldn't leave like for eight hours. You had to be home because you never knew what you were going to find. The elderly man or the neighbor. So now I'm kind of out on my own. If I get home at four, get home at five, so what? Who cares?

**So you live alone, but with animals?**

No, no animals.

**So you live alone?**

Yes, ma'am.

**Okay. Now, I see, Rome, Paris, London, Madrid, Nairobi. Tell us about that. How did you get the opportunity to do all that?**

I went when I had responsibilities. I just took the time. Now I'm setting off for different tours.

**So you did all this traveling over the course of thirty, forty years –**

Fifteen. Yeh, you go to England, then you go to Ireland, you combine it. You go to safari, you go to Egypt, different places. Nobody can take that away from you. And they actually did, because the house was invaded. I lived in Swissvale. Just invaded, everything smashed. Lost. All these tours and all these photos, did all kind of tapes, everything.

Everything's gone, but yet I don't forget it. Got my hair cut in Madrid and was on a safari for a week. These things you don't forget. Went to the Vatican, there's nothing like it. Ride the camel.

**You did? In Egypt?**

Yeah.

**What was Kenya like?**

It's funny. Terrible. Bad. You go to Nairobi and you see all these undernourished children, nasal discharge down to their lips, and they're just pulling on you for something. It's terrible. The tour guide gets the chief and gives them a few pennies, nickels, whatever. Then you go into these places. You don't forget them, believe me.

Would you believe, that you have them in Pittsburgh some of these cases that's as bad. I can tell you one right now. Probably there's a hundred thousand people pass him, some

fella, in front of Kaufmann's, Macy's, nobody notices. He's standing there. Then you see him going in the garbage. You know, you got helpless cases here.

**Do you think they want help?**

I don't know, it seems to be before, they had more help, more public help. And you see these people, the clean up, and try to tell them... "Well, I don't know anything about it, but I'll tell somebody." You don't know whether they're going to or not.

By example, this place. I came to this place a few weeks ago, asked for help for a girl that works in a restaurant, and I thought she was gonna, why should she be doing like two or three big panes of windows daily? Why shouldn't the establishment do it? There's big men in there. They've got a small woman doing it. Daily. We don't know. I said this girl needs help from this establishment, the restaurant. So I went to the County, the ninth floor, City County. "We can't help you." I said, "Well, who's the real estate?" Who are these people? They don't care. Cases like that, I like to help, get involved.

**Did you talk to the girl?**

No. Cause my sandwich won't be right when I go in there.

(Laughter)

I'm a nurse.

**I got ya.**

You just have to work under cover. I was taught you observe. You don't turn your back. I know what's going on any place. When I see somebody abused, especially an old person, handicapped, underdog, I like them. And I wasn't raised that way, in a way I was because my dad was police. And if anybody needed any help, the school needed help, you know you told at the dinner table and Mr. Ted was there. My mother was the same way. She was involved in all the organizations – the best-looking woman ever, to live. The nicest.

**Your dad was a police officer in Braddock?**

E.T. He worked for the Superintendent and them. He had to sign up for the Army. You know they did volunteers, but they didn't have to go. But my brother went to the Marines.

**You have Pearl Harbor listed?**

I took my elderly aunt there. She was the one that I lost. And she was never on an airplane, and she had serious medical problems besides the ankle. So we went on United, and we went in... They said the nurse would check her, and we said, "Okay." So she

went up to First Class. We went on the plane and I said, "You know, you have to get in the back." I said, "I don't think so," so we got to sit in the front. We got on the plane, United, and it was twelve hours and she got to see Pearl Harbor. And then I took a picture, that's my hobby, pictures. And the airplane, when she died, I used that as a memorial card. Should have brought that.

**Pearl Harbor is quite moving, isn't it?**

Mm, hmm. December 7<sup>th</sup>; I wanted her to see it.

**Yeah, I never thought it would have an impact on me the way it did. When I went there. What was Israel like?**

Muggy and terrible.

**Because of the heat?**

Yeah, that's it.

Then when I went to Egypt, we went to this nice restaurant, we had all these poor people outside. You had all these delis, you had little cheese and crackers. I seen these guys outside with the camel. So I took some, put them in a napkin and went out with them. I said, "Here's a treat for the camel." A fella grabbed it off me. He was gonna take it, and I always boast, "I don't have a temper," but I just kinda seen red, because I wanted the camel to have that treat, and I talked to myself, "Nah." Just buggy and terrible.

**What place did you like the best?**

Paris. An elderly lady that I took care of. She's an old neighbor, and for her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, that's where she was from. Nice. Right outside Paris. And she spoke and wrote three languages. She had one handicap. That was hearing, and people in those days didn't accept that, in 84. Over there at the highrise, I got her in there. She was even stoned one day over there in daylight. Very intelligent. Just perfect. She was just starting to get gray. She never, never called me Regina or Miss White, well maybe Miss White if somebody came to visit. "The Lady." And I thought, "I wonder why she's doing that." She was an old neighbor and I took care of her.

So then they were opening the Statue of Liberty, grand opening, big celebration. So I worked all night, got off at two o'clock in the morning to leave the Court and flew over to be there, and when I got there, they said, "It's closed. The elevator's broke." And I said, "I don't think so; I'll go the steps." And when I started up the steps there was all kinds of rose petals there, and I said to the fella, "Where did these rose petals come from?" Nancy Reagan had just come down. So I said to myself, "Bet she didn't have heels on."

And then it hit me that that's why they called it The Lady, called her The Lady, and that was respect. The woman was long gone and I didn't know why she was calling me that.

**So what did you like about Paris?**

Everything about it, the highlights, everything, the subway. Something about it was exciting, like New York. I like New York, too.

**What do you do when you go to these different places, do you sightsee?**

Well, I go on a tour, I don't go by myself. I'm planning to go to Hollywood. KDKA, in October, they're having that tour. Yeah. You have to go with people. You can't go alone. Like Portugal, when I went there it was a terrible place, and I scrambled it out, and you know I did, in the alley, and that's a poor, poor place.

The only place that was really wasn't nice to me, and I don't know if I can say this, was Poland. They weren't nice.

**Why not?**

They just couldn't understand you, you know, Russia even was nicer to me, do you know that?

**When did you visit Russia?**

Ten years ago.

**May I ask you how old you are?**

Just had a birthday not long ago – seventy-nine.

**Seventy-nine! So you went to Poland and all those places ten years ago?**

Well, ten was the last one.

**So now you're going to Hollywood?**

I'm trying to go. I don't know about, uh... my passport isn't any good now. But getting over there, we have to go from Pittsburgh to Chicago, and then it's train, which is nice. Then we're going to go to the Pacific and then we're going to go to Las Vegas, and then we're going to end up in Hollywood and come back. San Francisco. So I'm looking forward to that.

**You don't need a passport to go there.**

Well, I need a passport, maybe – there's a lot of restrictions on the airplane. I have my photo and that. I don't know. I don't know how far you can go.

**(question about I.D.)**

I got that. Just got a new one, and the government wouldn't give me – I got all dressed up for the picture and they gave me the old mug shot. I don't look like that.

**When you get the passport you can't smile.**

I'm going to smile anyway, so I'll be all right.

**Now, let me ask you about this list. *No Pets, Money for Nothing.***

That's all the movies I was in.

**You were in movies? You're a movie star?**

Mm, hmm. Trying to be. I'll tell you the one I really like. I like Peter Falk. *Roommates.*

**Which one was that? *Roommates.***

He had a grandson that attended Pitt, and he moved and Peter didn't want to go, so he decided to go to Polish Hill and hibernate, and he was gonna commit suicide, and he took one of these pipes out the window, and you had to see the daughter to appreciate that movie. Of course, he wasn't there. I was there at the fire scene. Sophie had her fire truck there. The fun of it is, you know, when you see these movies you know where you were. There I am.

**How do you get into these movies?**

You wouldn't believe this. *No Pets* was in Braddock. That's how I got in that. But my mother's maiden name is my favorite – Hughes. And I happened to be at home and they were doing some kind of demonstration. They couldn't get the movie from Pittsburgh. This Union bit, and there was a lady by the name of Hughes, and she was on the Court steps, so I hurried up and I got ready and I went down and I went to the Court and there she was. And I told her who I was, and I said, "I want to get in the movies."

She said, "Okay." So she said, "Go to the William Penn," this was a verbal commitment. "Go to the William Penn and ask for Nancy." That's how I got in.

**Nancy Wilson?**

Yeah. That's how I got in. Cause I used that name, Hughes.

**So that's why – then they would call you for other things?**

Mm, hmm.

**A Tale of Two Cities?**

That didn't come out yet. That was done just before the mayor got sick. Mr. McFeeley was there in front of me. It hasn't come out yet.

**And then Desperate Measures? I've heard of that. What was that about?**

There was a hospital scene there. Michael Keaton. I'll tell you where I was, at the old jail, and then they did the hospital scene over there at Mellon here in Pittsburgh. It was supposed to be in the hospital lobby.

What about *Sudden Death*.

**Which one was that?**

That was the one up at a – guess what I got paid for that movie?

**What?**

Hot dog and a coke. And I went up a second time. You know what it was, Channel 4, that wife decided to write that play. It was terrible gruesome.

***Sudden Death?* What was that about?**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> voice) It starred, uh, Claude Van Damme. The guy that used to own the Penguins produced it.**

His wife is supposed to be the big shot. Jean Van Claude wasn't there, but there was a little guy there.

**So you did Pirate Parrot video?**

Yeah, for the, uh... Well, what happened was I went to the restaurant there. This is by chance, these things happen. Boston Market. And I looked across the street and there's a Pirate Parrot there doing takeouts. So I went over and said, "I want my picture taken," and he said, "Okay." So it ended up at the, uh, ballgame.

**So when I go to the ballgame, I should pay attention?**

No. They don't have it anymore. Wait, it comes better. About five, six years ago... Comes better. So I'm so proud, I got the video from them, from the Executive Secretary. So I gave it to the nurse, where I was, I never got it back. And I went to get another one

and they got rid of them, so I don't have it. Somewhere locked up. Maybe Tony can get it.

**And you were a Committeewoman?**

Yeah. A couple of times.

**In Braddock?**

No, Swissvale. I needed a lot of votes to win that. Three votes. I worked the elections, and I'm very bashful and I just don't ask for things. And I needed these other couple votes, and I was with these other people and I just wouldn't ask for them, but I made it.

**And then you worked as an inspector. Now tell me about this medical research.**

I do that, too. I have another year at Pitt – Presbyterian Hospital. It's back research – MRI. And I just finished one with Dr. Malone at, she's affiliated with Montefiore Hospital. That's back research, too.

**So in their library there, or...**

No, she has a couple of offices in Oakland. I went there. Five sessions, and then you get standard questions, "Are you depressed?" You know, the normal questions. "Are you spiteful, yes or no?" They're all standard questions for these medical. And then they review them. And then you go in and you get a verbal report and you're paid a couple dollars and you're out.

**So what kind of research are they doing?**

This is big one because she's worked on this – Natalie, Dr. Natalie – and she's going to get in the medical journal, so I may be in that one. So that means that's the big one.

**So what is she studying?**

Back research is what she's got the grant for. And she brings like Miss Dodge, a dietician, and different ones in like that.

**So, you have problems with your back?**

Yeah, I got a brace here now. My knee was acting up like crazy.

I got hit by a car at 84. I was going to my job at the Court. It was my night off. I was living in Point Breeze, so I was meeting someone out near Thomas Boulevard. This woman came around from out of nowhere and (crash sound).

Smashed this one and ripped this one open. This one acts up once in awhile. I put the brace on a couple of weeks ago, and I kind of like that.

**Since 1984? That was twenty years ago?**

Mm, hmm, and then I was taking care of this 90-year-old, and through Harrisburg, I got her in a highrise, you know, the one across from Giant Eagle there. So I stayed with her all day and I sat in the chair. I was going to my job, I had a new car. So of course you park it away from everybody when you have a new car. So I came out and this fella was waiting for me, and mugged me. Smashed my head up with a gun.

**With a gun?**

Yeah. Twenty-eight stitches. Yeah, so I went through that.

**Did it cause any damage, permanently?**

Well, you get headaches for awhile, but, uh. It was ten o'clock at night and he was waiting for me. And of course, high rise. Nobody's looking out the window. Nobody sees anything. So then we had problems with the court. We had security up there, police. So I was telling them about it. And then they pick up the guy. So I had to appear at magistrate, in the court. He got two to four years, but he should have got five years.

**He stole what from you, your purse, or something?**

Everything. Yeah. But you don't get a... oh yeah, had to go to... head's wide open.

**And this was after you got hit by the car?**

No, before that. Took the new car. He wanted me to take him someplace. Well, you're taught not to go. So I said "No," and he threw me and smashed my head. He said, "I have a gun." Just thank God, it wasn't loaded, you know. So he took the car and smashed it all up, it was downtown, and guess who had to pay for the damage? Guess who had to clean the blood up? Me. Yeah.

**You had insurance, didn't you?**

Well, they didn't take care of it. The carburetor was broken, the tailpipe was broken. You couldn't move it. Smashed inside, you know. That was a crisis in my life. And then the home invasion was another one. I went to church, ten o'clock mass, and came home and found all that. Then they came back again, again, you know. One of those deals.

**That was in Swissvale?**

Yeah. And the other crisis was that my mother was married on her birthday and buried on her birthday. They had a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and she got sick in 1948 and she died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, and my dad said, "We'll bury her on her birthday, the 27<sup>th</sup>." It was a big crisis.

**How old were you when she died?**

Nineteen. She was the best. Always perfect. The best-looking mother in the world. The nicest.

**She had hair like yours? You hair is beautiful.**

No, she was a redhead.

**Were you a redhead?**

No. Dishwater blonde. That's what they called it.

**Okay. So who had the biggest influence on your life?**

Well, she and my dad and Sister Mary Robert, a Dominican nun. She was my seventh grade teacher and we were friends for 42 years.

**And that was from your elementary school in Braddock?**

We don't have the school. St. Brendan's.

**St. Brendan's. But there's a Good Shepherd in Braddock, right? Yeah, yeah.**

**Is she still around? Sister Mary Robert?**

No, no. She died on Assumption. Do you believe that? And I wear this here cause she had Lou Gehrig's Disease. And Dominicans at one time we had, they had 500 nuns. And one of the sisters says that she was the best-looking one to graduate from St. Thomas High School. And she was the best-looking one of the 500 Dominicans. Perfect, perfect, perfect.

**Where did they live?**

Columbus, Ohio. Well they lived at the Convent. The mission.

**But they had their headquarters in Columbus?**

Yes. But she died on Assumption, which was remarkable.

**Was she in Columbus when she died?**

Yeah, infirmary. But she developed this Lou Gehrig's and toward the last, you know,...

**What was it about her that influenced you?**

She was perfect. You know, you're taught nobody's perfect in life. She was perfect. Perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect. Always smiled. Best-looking woman. Lay person, no lay person... Elizabeth Taylor, probably.

**Tell us about Elizabeth Taylor.**

Well, she came to the Ross Park Mall, and I always admired her.

**That was a few years ago?**

Yeah, I was driving, and I said, "Should I go there? It'll be so crowded. Should I go there? What should I do?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm gonna go." So she was late. She was a half-hour late, and the people from Kaufmann's, they had to go back to their jobs, so that meant I got up front. And she come out. And there was cards to sign if you wanted a picture of her. And I was signing for everybody to get a picture, and I said, "What about myself?" So she come out and she said, "I'll take some questions. She talked to us. She kind of hesitates, you know. Then, she didn't have the weight problem. And she come out and the questions were submitted. And the one, uh, the person was... do you want to hear the questions? I can remember that, but what I had yesterday to eat, I can't remember. And she said, a girl, young girl, she said... It was a couple men, the men decided not to come. I wonder why. So anyway, the girl says "Of all your husbands, who was the best one?" And she said, "none of your damn business." I mean, she said it right out. So they said, "Your mother was in the hospital, broke her hip, why didn't you go right away?" And she said, "Well, she's an old lady." Her mother was the one that promoted her, remember that. And she said, "I had a commitment, somebody personal flew me over." So then somebody said, "Where is your husband, Larry?" And she said, "Ooh, how nice of you to ask. He's working, and this is only a short trip."

So then the big one come, and guess who publicized it on TV that night? KDKA. And they said, this woman came out in a wheelchair, and she said, "You know, I'm a Catholic," and she said, "Why are you promoting this AIDS all the time?" Well, that irritated her and she said, "Catholic don't mean anything." She said, "My daughter-in-law got it." She says, "Could happen to anybody."

So TV that night – that's who they had. They didn't have any of the nice things about her.

So, wait a minute. I followed it up. Maybe six months later, guess what? She was getting interviewed on television, and she said, "Why do you want to talk about this AIDS? Why are you promoting it?"

She said, “My daughter-in-law got it. She wasn’t doing anything, she just contacted it. But she did have a one-night stand.” That come out. So she admitted it. But they made a big thing about it. Now she’s in a wheelchair and she’s had all those accidents. It stemmed from the horse, falling off a horse. I don’t know how many times we thought she was gone, you know.

**I was at Ross Park Mall that day, but I didn’t know she was there. I saw all the papers there. I thought, “What’s all this?” Then I found out Elizabeth Taylor was down there in Kaufmann’s.**

It wasn’t bad cause she was late, but wait a minute, she made that half-hour up. See, I was driving, so I got right in there. It wasn’t really that bad, it really wasn’t. Oh, there was another one. There was a young girl, she was a good-looking girl, and she said, “I have a book here – will you sign it?” and She said, “Oh, Elizabeth, they say I look like you.” Well, Elizabeth hesitated. She was a nice-looking girl, and I looked over and Elizabeth said something to security, and Elizabeth said, “No, you can’t come up.”

But guess who I met by herself? Well, you can’t compare these to her.

**Who?**

Mother Teresa. She was alone.

**Where did you see her?**

She was at the Cathedral and you know how she speaks, you know, and she said, “I’ll be leaving soon. I’m going to the airport,” she said, so I got out of church early – the Cathedral. And I went around the ground there, you know? And here she come out by herself. And I’m not this kind. I went up to her and she had the veil down here, and her face was like leather, leather. She didn’t say one word. She looked at me, and I said, I don’t know why I said it, cause it happened, I said, “Do you mind if I touch a Saint?” And she went like that, and I went like that. I don’t know why I touched her. Cause she’s a Saint. Little woman.

She’s very little. She was interviewed different times on the radio, and imagine being on the airplane with her, and she was flying to this convent in New York. She said, “I don’t want no radio, no television, no rug on the floor, and she said, “Okay, Sister.” When she left they put it all back.

So, can you compare those two?

**Elizabeth and Mother Teresa? Well, now, you can compare them all right, but, um, Sister Mary Robert –**

Very good-looking. Just as nice, you know, one of those kind.

**What's been the hardest part – your biggest struggle in life?**

Oh, those different crises. That invasion didn't help. Mother's birthday was always a big thing. You know, you save ten or a quarter, always you save. We traveled a lot with my mother. The country. "Let's go here, let's go there." Every summer we went to the farm. Sister had a farm in Manheim, outside of Lancaster. We spent the summer there. There wasn't too much animals, that was all tobacco. My aunt and my uncle worked in the factory. They had inherited this farm. That's where we spent the summer. So it was the Amish, plain people, but nice. That's where we spent the summer. I meet them in Pittsburgh. Every once in awhile they're downtown. Yeah. So it's familiar with them.

**You've have a wealth of experience from traveling and meeting people.**

Nobody can take it away from me. Went to Russia, that was something. You know you'd always... They'd say, "Oh You'd better not go to Russia, better not go to Africa. This'll happen, you know." There was a young fellow on the tour, nicest guy, helped everybody, you know? "Can I do this? Can I do that?" So we get to Russia and guess what? He was pulled in by the KG, cause he had couple Bibles on him. So we had to sit in the waiting room because of he. His dad was a minister. In those days, it was, you know... It was an experience.

**How long ago was that? (unintelligible) it was '84.**

Africa and Russia I kind of liked. I don't know if I'd want to go back.

**Why not?**

I, I just don't know, there are other places to go. The heat, you can't take the heat. No, you can't take it. One time I believe I had ten glasses of ice tea. Would you believe me – you go out in the morning and you go out at night. This is Sister Mary Robert. This is one of the group pictures I took. Cut out.

**She looks like she was young there. She young there?**

Her sister was a nun, too. She died. A cancer victim, yeah. They have a group picture of the nuns, graduates of St. Thomas. You can't tell her from her sister. I had to look a couple times.

**They had that whole big habit, didn't they?**

Yeah. Their mother was a redhead, too. She had black curly hair with that auburn like on top, you know.

**Where did you live before you moved into that apartment.**

Jane Holmes.

**What's that?**

It's a hundred and five-year-old place. When my house was invaded, I stayed there for awhile.

**It was an apartment building?**

No, it's a residence.

**Is it in Braddock?**

No, it's in Wilkinsburg.

**Jane Holmes? Is it on Swissvale Avenue?**

Yeah. Then they decided to close it, so you had to leave.

**So where did you go when you left there?**

I have an apartment. I'm a loner. No, different ones will say "You're a loner." Yet, I don't know. I like to share, whatever that means. You know, share papers and different events and a nice picnic for the children on Sunday. A girl cuts my lunch meat and I make sure her family goes. I like stuff like that. Yet I don't forgive. If somebody does something to me, I'm not a forgiver.

**Oh, that's no good.**

No. I have to stay away from them. So I go from one extreme to the other, but I'm not selfish, you know. There were times when I didn't have any money to buy this or that, but I did without.

**Did you say that you didn't like the Jane Holmes residence? Why? What did they do there?**

The way they closed the place, like you had to get out in a hurry. Your mother's in there, a 90-year-old woman, and you're taught Alzheimers supposed to have routine, then all of a sudden you go down the hall and, then your children come in and "Hurry up and take mom out in a hurry." Put momma here in three thousand, or thirty-five hundred dollar rooms these people got to pay. You get a board that doesn't care about humanity and you're in trouble, big trouble. So you don't sanction anything like that, no.

**Did you have trouble finding a place when they closed? When you left there?**

Well, in a way, yes, because it was bad timing. I wanted to go to Webster Hall and all the students had the places. Yes it was, and this place is near where my home was. Two blocks. I owned a home, and it just wasn't available. What you wanted wasn't available. A woman you got to watch where you're going. Then it was available, a couple from School was leaving, and then they weren't getting out from out of town and I was held up. Webster Hall wasn't available.

**What did you do?**

Well, I walked the pavement for awhile, believe me. Then PAT Authority didn't have buses where you could go, Braddock Hills and those places. You have to go out. You can't be, um... That was something else. It wasn't fun.

**So you were essentially homeless for awhile?**

No, I'm still there.

**You were out, lookin, lookin, lookin.**

I was walking the pavement. Then Webster Hall went and she said she wasn't taking any names, applications, and I said, "Well, I had prom here. It's where I'd like to be." And I do research at Presby and it's convenient. So then I said, "Can I have the key?" I went down the hall and I came back and she was more relaxed with me.

She said, "Maybe the end of October," and we had to get out by November 4<sup>th</sup>. September 5<sup>th</sup> till November. She said, "Well, there will be a couple places by the end of October, but I don't know if they're going to sign a lease or not. So I said, "Okay." So I said, "I'll take the brochure. Thank you. My name is White, and she looked at me."

I went across the street to the diocese building. I went to Social Service and a nun, Rita, and I told her. I said I want an apartment over there. I said you have a flyer here advertising a church and I said, "I'd like to be in here."

She said, "Guess what? I'll call and I'll tell them I'm your sister. See if we can get you in."

Couldn't get me in. You get three or four of these college people, forget about it. Just Mama calls ahead of time and they're all booked up. And that way, it's cheap, you know? Three or four people pay.

**So you went back to the neighborhood, Braddock?**

No, I'm in Edgewood. I was in Swissvale, now I'm in Edgewood. People are more ritzy.

**They are ritzy there, aren't they?**

But you know what I do notice, that the people are more friendly. Even the men walking, “Hello, there, how you doin?” You don’t get that too much, you know, Swissvale and those other places, Wilksburg.

**Which part of Edgewood do you live in?**

Right in the borderline of Swissvale there, about a block up from the Swissvale line.

**Is it an apartment building or is it a house?**

It’s an apartment. A private apartment.

**Well, that’s nice. Are you still driving?**

No, in this invasion, they decided to go into my garage and smash my car up. No, I’m not driving.

**So that was the new car that was stolen?**

No, that was the old one. It was a new car when I got it. This is another car. This was a Saturn.

**So then you never drove again, never had a vehicle?**

No. And then, to get this special I.D... You don’t drive anymore.

**What kind of special I.D.?**

Well, it’s like your license. A photo I.D. They don’t want to give it to you. I had problems with that. I went to this man, that man, it was the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month, and I said, “Well, how about giving me the application?” So I went up to the Lt. Governor and the aide, the secretary put a note on top of it. I went down and he took care of it in a hurry. She said, “I’ll wait up here. Let them call me.” He gave me the same old picture.

I went to the bank the other day. She said, “This doesn’t look like you.”

I said, “You better believe it.” But they have the I.D.’ so I guess that’s what counts.

**But you’re right on the busline then.**

Yeah, I am.

**Why do you have here President Bush, Mrs. Bush...**

That’s all the people I met, shook hands with. He was down at the point. Gore was there. Gore was walking along Fifth Avenue. He took my hand like this and twisted it, for

some reason. He's a bigger guy now, so I don't know what he'd do. Shirley Jones, I talked to her. She was down... Would you believe in 1949, when I was at the hospital, training, I was in the nursery and the administrator was a friend of his and she brought him up, and he's a little guy.

**Betty White, where did you see her?**

She was down at the point advertising for insurance. I used to watch her on television and I knew she was an animal lover. So I mozied down one morning and said, "You and I have something in common."

She said, "What is it?"

I said, "Our names." And I said, "You're a friend of Elizabeth Taylor. I said "How come you're always sponsoring dogs. Every time you turn around you have a dog on your lap, you and Elizabeth. Elizabeth always carried a poodle." I said, "What about the cats?"

"Oh, we like cats."

I said, "How come I never see them?" But she was very nice, too. Down to earth, you know? And no makeup – plain.

**The Rose Parade – what about that?**

That's where I'm planning on going. I was supposed to go about two years ago, and then they said they had too many and they cancelled it. Then the legs started acting up. And then about two days ahead of time, there was a (unintelligible) forget about it.

**Let me tell you something. You go to the Rose Parade, you've got to get there early, before sunrise, because it's so crowded and the year I went it was freezing cold and I wasn't prepared for it. I'm in California! I wasn't prepared for that, and there we are, about four o'clock in the morning, sitting on the curb.**

Probably raining.

**That was something. But there's nothing like it.**

I would imagine.

**Yes, and you smell all the flowers.**

Don't you think, when you go on a tour, that's their job. They're prepared. Have an umbrella. An old lady like me, a seat. You know.

**What's this, appoint judge?**

Yeah, that new Impex show. You know, all the conventions all over the world? Taiwan... Well they're having it at the Convention Center, and it's 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. Why am I promoting this? So I'm going to be the judge. And that was just by chance. The woman hasn't met me, so she might refuse me. I called about tickets, I gave tickets away. And she says, "Oh, by the way, I have you on the phone. Would you like to be a judge?" And I said, "A pleasure." So I'll be able to walk around there.

### **What's the show about?**

Inventions. All over the world, they come.

### **Impex?**

That's the convention, that's what they name it. They always have it in the middle of the week. I guess they don't want that weekend crowd, you know, deliberately. Yeah, it's going to be down at the convention. Everything. Microphones... Everything new, your new camera, Your new footwear. Everything out of this world. You see things that maybe in your lifetime you won't see. They're promoting it. They want sponsors. And you don't go away there, you don't learn something. You don't go away that you don't get something. There's nothing like it, really.

### **How do you stay so active?**

I don't know. I try to be active.

### **Do you eat right?**

No. I don't sleep right, either. You know, when I lived at Jane Holmes, I had to sleep on the floor for four nights because I didn't have a bed. The bed didn't come, and I said, "Oh, boy." Well I guess I was homeless in the apartment, huh. Wasn't funny.

### **We helped a homeless lady get an apartment, got her a bed, and she threw it away. And she slept on the floor.**

There was a woman in research and she had a terrible back and she said that she was over there in Israel. She was talking with a group there, with a doctor, and she said she slept on the floor. I mean, she had a bad back, curvature, and she said she never felt any, she never felt better. She brought that up.

When the house was invaded, I couldn't go upstairs, cause they come back. But this time it was four days, cause when I tried to get the bed it, they only deliver certain days. Somebody said, "You want a bed?" And Peggy said "You want a bed?" You have to watch what bed you get. You have to get your own. And I got one of these ones, you know, one of those couches that you open up. If you fall...you know, I'm worried about moving out. Try to go to Webster Hall. You don't have all this furniture. You look for that, you know. I do.

### **Why don't you eat right?**

Well, I'm a finicky eater. I don't eat cooked vegetables at all. And I usually, I have a kitchen right now. It's kind of a no-no. I like to eat downtown, get a sandwich and be with people, you know. Actually, myaunt, my elderly aunt died in 1974, and I took care of her, she was my mother's sister. We lived together and I'd come home from the hospital, I'd be with her, and I enjoyed cooking, doing things, sharing with her, being with her. And when she died, I never sat down at the table.

### **Did you ever go to the Senior Citizens Center?**

No.

### **That's a good place to meet people and do things.**

I find downtown, places like this, the mall. I met a woman the other day, I felt real good, she used to wait for the bus where I lived over there on Edgewood Avenue, Swissvale, and she was always like a hippie, young girl, you know. So she came the other day, this was funny. I thought it was a different woman. I didn't know the woman. I was sitting there at the bank and she said, "You're the woman that waited for the bus on Delaware?"

I said, "Yeah." And I said, "You're the one that used to tell me about your little bunny, you had a bunny at home."

She said, "Yeah."

And I said, "I'm the one that made the contact for you to get that bunny." What happened, I was at the Mall and this girl got on and she was handicapped and she was a little bit slow, and she had a cat in a carrier. She kept talking and talking and talking. And I always wanted to look for her, like at the Court, there's trouble. It's always me or on the bus. She said, "Yeah, I have a bunny, I have to get a home for it. I have it outside and the landlord don't want it. It's getting cold out." It was about four or five years ago. So she kept on talking and there was a friend with me. I said, "Oh, by the way, there's a woman waits for the bus. She's always telling me about her bunny in the house, what he does, all these cute things. Give me your phone number."

This woman I met down at Kaufmann's the other day. You'd never believe it. I said, "I'm the one that told you about that bunny."

She said, "Yeah, my brother-in-law and my sister took it and it was the best bunny we ever had."

And I said, "You mean to tell me that memory came back?" That that woman that needed help. They went out and got the little bunny. They said it was the nicest bunny they ever had. It makes you feel good, cause I didn't have to get involved. I could have

got in the front of the bus or someplace else.

**It's good to help people.**

I like it. Sometimes it pays. Like at Jane Holmes, you couldn't help a patient because you weren't allowed.

**Really?**

Somebody needed a push or somebody... Why's she's not eating? Take care of that. Yeah, like you get a pet and you like him and all of a sudden, down boy. Pet him on the head.

**Is that building still empty?**

You have a few million? Want to buy it?

**Wish I had a few million. I don't know if I'd buy it.**

A company from California is selling it. But I think what they'll do with it is tear it down. What gets me is I pay taxes. I paid taxes all my life, I'm still paying taxes. And all this stuff that they did and all these grants, even a couple years ago, they had the whole place painted, and few weeks before that inside... and then they'll sell it. You know, these grants, that's my money, the grants. And a few women, you know, the husbands have money. "Eh, take some money, need some money." Bitter. I'm bitter about that, it's bad. No, it's not fair. Nothing fair about it.

You know what. This is about Jack. They had a place there in Shadyside one time, and she needed some help. And I went there and got it for her. One of those bedside, broke my car trying to get it out.

**You have the worst luck with cars.**

Yeah, I like cars, I liked driving, I really did.

**Well, it's a good thing we have good bus service here in Pittsburgh.**

Well, only in Braddock Hills, you know, where I wanted to go, where I could have got help. There was affiliations, there was senior citizens, and across from the Braddock Cemetery, where Mother and Dad is, where I did the movies, *No Pets*, and I couldn't get there, cause there's no bus. What's fair about it? What's fair about it? You mean to tell me, you can look out in the parking lot and all those people have cars.

You don't get it at night, you don't get it on weekends. Now Easter, I had the flu. I was in bed for five days. Then the legs started acting up. That was another week. I needed help. You know, get somebody to be there. I was there by myself.

**Well, doesn't anybody help you ever?**

Peggy comes, once in awhile.

**Who's Peggy?**

She's a friend from Jane Holmes. But sometimes, you know, you need help.

**Yeah, but how do you get help if you don't have a phone?**

You don't. You don't.

**You don't have a neighbor that could help you?**

Well next door's nice to me. They're all animal lovers.

**Well, I'd worry, you should have someone to help you.**

Well, like Webster Hall, you'd have the help, and up there in Braddock Hills you'd have the help.

I was raised in Braddock and we were the ones on the street that had the phone, and all, you know, the railroad at one time they were on call, and this big guy across the street from us, now my dad was a six footer, this guy was bigger and heavier, come over, knocked us down, and used the phone. We always had a phone. My elderly aunt, I had two phones in the house, would you believe me? The court you had to call in every, that's why I'm sick and tired of phones.

**So that's why you got rid of it?**

Well, the house was invaded, that's the only reason. And then Jane Holmes was the last, they won't let you use the phone.

**So why don't you get one of those cheap cell phones?**

Yeah, I could, but I can't see carrying a phone around, that's an important...

**For emergencies.**

Yeah.

**Now you're going to make me worry about you.**

No, it will be okay.

**You can get a phone that you don't have to pay for, just to call 911.**

I had one of those for the Mt. Lebanon Police. But the connector was lost.  
Yeah, I did have one. And I understand Swissvale and all them you do use that.

**Well, what if we get you one?**

No, no, I'm all right. I'll get one. I'll get one.

**Can I have these papers?**

You gonna make a copy?

**Sure.**

It's all I have. I was tired writing this.

(static)

**My mother hasn't eaten in the kitchen since my dad died ten years ago. She either goes in the bedroom or...**

So it does happen. It's not only me. I just couldn't sit down. I'd get stuff for the animals and I'd feed them. I had a fenced-in yard, so most of the time I just, uh...

(conversation about taking her picture)