

George Jones: *Elm Grove in the '40s and '50s*

Carrie Nobel Kline: Can you start by saying, "My name is?"

George Jones: Oh, my name is George Jones.

CNK: Once more.

GJ: My name is George Jones.

CNK: Okay. And where are we?

GJ: We're up at The Point overlooking beautiful Wheeling, West Virginia.

CNK: I'm just curious about what could have gotten you so interested in history and so committed to this city that you would work to create this point.

(007) GJ: Well, I was born and raised in Wheeling and have always been interested in Wheeling. I worked away from Wheeling for a while. My wife and I were both from Wheeling, and we spent all of our time traveling back and forth between home and Wheeling. So we decided that we're either going to build a life elsewhere or we're going back to Wheeling. So we came back to Wheeling. And I just gotten -- I've always been interested in Wheeling, and Chip actually had the idea of the point. And since we worked together -- Why, we just kind of grew together and have just gotten more and more involved with it. It's one of those things once you start -- It's like that first potato chip, you know. And you keep finding more. It's a treasure hunt. And you just keep finding more and different and unusual things. It just grows and grows.

CNK: Well, what brought you back to Wheeling? You were traveling around --

(020) GJ: Well, no. I had graduated and gone on to work in Pittsburgh, and we weren't far enough away to start a life of our own. So we kept coming back and forth to Wheeling, and we decided to move back to Wheeling. We were both born

and raised here, my wife and I. So we came back and set up. And we've been back ever since.

CNK: Tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what growing up was like for you.

(025) GJ: Well, I was born and raised in Elm Grove, which is out below the old Liberty Dairy on Marshall Avenue. And well, I went to school out there. Kruger Street School and Bridge Street and Triadelphia High School. It's now the Triadelphia Junior High. And just grew up there.

CNK: Were those public schools? The Kruger Street and --

(032) GJ: Right, they were all public schools.

CNK: What do you remember about those school years? Any teachers or --

GJ: Well, I had a lot of teachers. I had a lot of the same teachers that my father had! So they were a lot of old teachers around at that time, particularly the ones in high school. They -- The other ones I really don't remember a whole lot. The main thing I remember about Kruger Street -- They had a large interior room that we had phys ed or gymnasium or whatever you called it. And the only thing I can really remember we had the old globes over the lights, and somebody threw a basketball up and knocked one of them down. Of course it crashed and made a big to-do. The other thing I remember a great deal was quite a joy to go in and try to cajole the janitor into letting you ring the school bell. They had a school bell with a big rope that he always rang at various times for the school days. So we used to try to entice him to let us ring the bell. Of course, sometimes he would, sometimes he wouldn't.

CNK: What would it take?

(047) GJ: Just a lot of "please" and "will yous," those sorts of things to do. And he would let the good kids ring the bell. "Were you good today" sort of thing. So those things were what took, what got the effort to ring the bell.

CNK: Well, what kind of kid were you? Were you one of those pleasers?

GJ: A rotten kid.

CNK: A what?

(052) GJ: A rotten kid. A teaser, a troublemaker. I was always rowdy in school, and I always sat in the front because the teachers could keep an eye on me there. A neighborhood boy that lived next door, he and I fought every day coming home from school. We'd always get into a fight, and I'd come home crying and carrying on. "I'm never going to play with him again," and after supper off we'd go. So those things went on.

CNK: What would you play? What would you do in your neighborhood?

(060) GJ: Well, we lived not too far from Wheeling Creek. And we roamed the creek side. We had forts and tunnels and all sorts of things down around on the creek bank, down there. And we knew the creek bank, and we had trails that we would ride our bicycles through. And play and throw rocks. Get into all sorts of mischief. Those areas.

CNK: You'd build these forts and tunnels?

(066) GJ: Yes, we built forts and dig tunnels. And the neighborhood wasn't very occupied at that time, and there were a lot of vacant lots and things around. Where I'd been back lately, and there are none anymore. So you wonder what the kids do. But we had a lot of room down there to play and carry on in the creek. Of course the creeks at that time, the sewers ran right into the creeks, so there where the Italian American Club -- Right below the Italian American Club was a sewage outlet and right at the first bridge where the Convenient Mart is up at Kruger Street, there was a sewer outlet there. So those two -- We used to swim in the creek above the, above the one there at the Italian American Club. And I used to get my backside warmed every time I'd come home. My mother wouldn't allow me in the creek, but they always pushed me in. I never wanted to go in, but I always ended up wet! Could never figure out how my mother knew. Come home sopping wet with your hair all matted down and everything. Could never figure out how my mother knew I was in the creek. Dumb kids!

CNK: Well, what about this Italian American Club? Was that a curiosity for you?

(084) GJ: Well, it wasn't there at the time. I forget what they called it. There was a -- We always called it S Qs for some reason or another, and I don't know, I don't know why we called that area S Qs. There was a camp of some sort there, but I don't know -- I don't recall what it was. Whether it was just a private camp or something. But the Italian American Club came, oh, many years later. But -- Yes, let me get that. We don't want you in that Eric.

CNK: S Qs?

(091) GJ: Yes, that was, that was a swimming spot that -- There was a bend in the creek there, so it was deep there. And we always went swimming there. Matter of -- One time we found a -- We were rummaging around in one of the neighbors' garages, and we found a hand grenade. And we were going to go down and blow the hole up deeper with the hand grenade. And somebody called the cops, and they took the hand grenade off of us. So, we were always drawn to those sorts of things.

CNK: A little gang of you?

(097) GJ: Oh yes, all the kids that lived in the neighborhood. There were a lot of kids that lived in the neighborhood there. So we, we all played together.

CNK: What about your own family? Did you have sisters and brothers?

GJ: Yes, I had three sisters. They were all older sisters, so didn't play much with them.

CNK: What was home like for you?

(102) GJ: Oh, very good. We -- My dad worked for Krogers, and his father worked for Krogers. So we had a good home life. We always thought we were -- We never considered ourselves rich, but we always had, had lots to eat. And dad always had a steady job. It was a good job. When he retired in, must have been -- Must have been '70s he retired. He had been there 40 years, and they gave him his employment application back. And at that time he was going to go to work as a Kroger store manager, and the wages he expected

was 20 dollars a week. And that was the, that was the sum up to send down job, not a 40 hour a week job. But we always, we always ate the dented in cans. Excuse me. No, no Eric, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Your dad will skin you.

CNK: Good eyes!

(118) GJ: But we always ate the -- We always ate the cans with no labels and dented cans, and the boxes with the tops cut off. And of course, all the dark meat. When somebody asked me sometime if that dark meat would hurt you, and I told them I was living proof that it wouldn't hurt you.

CNK: Did you care?

GJ: Oh no, we didn't care. We didn't know any different. We thought everybody ate that way.

CNK: So he was a manager?

GJ: Yes. He was a Kroger store manager for 40 years.

CNK: Would he come and tell you about life in the store?

(127) GJ: Oh, yes. Well, I always was very industrious. Where -- Who's the dentist on Bethany Pike right across from Vance Church? The Kroger store was in that, was in that building. And my -- When I was probably 8 or 10 years old, I always grew onions and parsley and tomatoes and what in our backyard. And then I'd bundle them up and sell them in the Kroger store. So I was exposed to the Kroger, the business world real quick, real early. The big thing I remember about that store is they had a big cold air register right underneath the counter. And they didn't have the cash registers then, they figured it up on the back of the paper bag and whatever. But one of my, one of my first jobs was cleaning out the cold air register. And I got to keep all the money I found in it. So that was always a big job.

CNK: What was the cold air register?

(141) GJ: Yes, it was a cold air -- It was cold air return for a furnace. So it was a big open grate in front of the, in front of the counter there. So all the pennies

and the nickels that went down there I got to keep when I cleaned out the register.

CNK: So you spent a lot of vacations working at Krogers?

(146) GJ: Yes, yes. I always spent a lot of time working at Krogers. As a, as an unemployed or a non paid employee or something like that. But never -- I was never an employee at Krogers, but I did a lot of work at Krogers.

CNK: No summer jobs there for you?

GJ: No, not as, not as an employee. One other recollection I had there -- That hillside coming down in front of Vance Church, my cousin and I would get the forerunners of the shopping buggies, which were just a little four wheel cart with a basket on it. And we would ride it down that hill in front of Vance Church. We were always riding those things up and down the hillside.

CNK: On the National Road?

(156) GJ: Yes, on the National Road. We'd haul them up to the top of the hill by Becketts and ride all the way down on the road on those shopping carts.

CNK: I bet that had some exciting moments.

GJ: Well, I really don't recall any close calls or anything that we had. I just remember doing it. But we did things like that.

CNK: What about, what about at home? What were family dinners like? What was the scene? Where there chores?

(164) GJ: Okay. My -- I don't remember when it was, but we were, we were all rather old and somebody spilled a glass of milk. And my dad was so upset, he said, "Am I ever going to be able to eat a meal without a glass of milk being knocked over." So with the three girls and myself and mom and dad, it was, it was typical dinners I guess.

CNK: A lot of talking?

((170) GJ: Yes, there always seemed to be a lot of talking and carrying on and conversing and -- Of course all the other poking and pinching and normal things that go on with kids.

CNK: What were your sisters' names?

(171) GJ: Valerie was the oldest. Patty was the middle and Sandy was the youngest. And for years Sandy used to say she always thought her name was Damn It Sandy because dad would call, "Valerie, Patty, Damn It Sandy!" He could, was always getting confused with their names.

CNK: And where were you in line?

GJ: I was the last one.

CNK: The youngest?

GJ: Yes, I was the youngest.

CNK: And what were your parents' names?

(180) GJ: Bernard and Pat. My dad died about three years ago. Mom's still living.

CNK: Well, what kind of woman was she? Did she whistle around the house or was the kitchen a place to hang out with her?

GJ: Well, yes. Mom, mom was real involved with the kids because dad worked a lot. And she was, she was always real involved with us. We used to swing. We had a swing up on the back porch. And we had lots of conversations. Just family gatherings on the swing on the back porch. She was, she was strict with us too. We had a -- Well, she was always swatting us for something. After she broke all the rods out of the window blinds over us, she would go to the yardsticks. And after the yardsticks were all gone, then we had a forsythia bush out back. And so she was always cutting switches out of the forsythia bush out there to give us a swat with. Keep us straight.

CNK: Was there ever any music in your house?

(197) GJ: No. Well, we had, we always had the radios and the Victrolas and whatever. But none of us played any musical instruments. At one time I thought I used to -- I would like to be a drummer, and I used to beat on empty boxes, but that was about as far as I got. And I think that my parents could stand! But that was, that was the only -- And we never really had any interest in, as far as playing any music or any instruments.

CNK: How do you think you got that idea to be a drummer?

(205) GJ: I have no idea. I have no idea. I just remember at times going around beating on the boxes with the rhythm of the music. That was, that was just a --

CNK: No drummer models in your life?

GJ: No. No, no drummer models.

CNK: Well, you mentioned the Vance Church. Were you a church going family?

(21) GJ: Yes, we were Methodist. We went to the Methodist church out in the Grove. Been out there, a member out there for years and years.

CNK: Talk a little bit about what the church was like, what it looked like inside, what services were like. How it affected you maybe as a child.

(215) GJ: Oh, I'm not very religious. I -- So I don't think it had much of an affect on us. I remember the stained glass windows. They still have them out there. I was always impressed with the stained glass windows because they faced to the east. They faced to the east? Yes, I guess they faced -- Anyhow, I remember the sun always shining brightly on them, and it was very impressive. But mom and dad kept us involved with the church. I guess it didn't take much!

CNK: You didn't -- Did you feel any -- Did you look forward to going, did you dread going?

(227) GJ: No. I think it was just one of those habits that we grew up with. That Sunday you got ready to go to church. And off we'd go. We always went as a family. But it was never, never pushed, you know, or ever meant to be a drudgery. We just -- It was one of those things you did on Sunday. You got up and went to church. So we did.

CNK: Well, you talked about your mom being fairly strict, and she ran a tight ship. Did you all have chores and was that different for a boy than for the girls?

GJ: No, not really. Well, let's say not in our family. I had to do the dishes and take the garbage out. I guess it was my job to burn the trash. I always took the trash out back and burned it. And I don't remember the girls ever doing

that. But as far as the other housework, you know, you had to keep your room up and make your beds and clean up. The one thing I do remember is that it was my job to get up in the morning -- We had a coal furnace, and I had to run down and get the furnace started. So I had to get out in the cold and run down and fire the furnace up when I was older. I don't remember when I acquired that job, but that was one I never thought much of. I always wanted to get up in a warm house. And I was the one that had to go down and fire the furnace and shake all the clinkers out of the furnace and shovel the coal in. Get her going, and then all the rest of them would get up.

CNK: So would you complain about that?

(252) GJ: Oh yes, but it didn't do any good. That was -- I guess I was older then. That was one of my main chores. And probably the girls took over more with helping with the cooking and the house cleaning, whatever. It was one of the things I acquired. But we were all fairly industrious so we were -- The girls were always baby sitting and doing house cleaning and whatever. So I mowed grass and hauled ashes. Did those things. So we were always looking for a way to make a buck.

CNK: To do what with?

(263) GJ: Well, dad and I always fought about -- He always thought I should put it in the bank and save it. And I would save it as long as I had some goal in mind. That I would save it till I had enough to buy a ball glove or something like that. That I didn't have any problem saving. But I saved it to spend it, and dad always wanted me to save it. Being of that Depression era, well -- Let's see, when were they married? I think, I think they were married in -- I think they were married in '29. So anyhow, they were trying to raise kids and what have you through a depression, so they were, they were pretty tight with a buck!

CNK: And when were you born?

GJ: I was born in '37.

CNK: Thirty-seven?

GJ: Yes.

CNK: What kind of a man was your dad? It's the first you mentioned about your relationship with him really.

(280) GJ: Oh, he was -- Oh, we did a lot of things together. He was, he was industrious, and he did a lot of things around the house. He always had me helping him and showing me how to do things. You know, work with him. So we, we were close that way. It wasn't a, wasn't a lot of recreation. There just wasn't a lot of time for recreation in those days, but he and mom were both tennis players. And they played down at Wheeling Park, so we were always exposed to tennis. So we did a lot of tennis play. We would go down as a family and play tennis down at Wheeling Park. So I was well acquainted with the park systems. I grew up real quick around Wheeling Park and knew -- Was all over that park and knew every inch and nook and cranny.

CNK: What were your favorite things to do?

(295) GJ: Well, they had a monkey house down there that I always enjoyed. It was, it was by the tennis courts. I'm trying to think how things have changed down there. But, the tennis courts were pretty close, I guess to where the bubble is now. And then the monkey, monkey cages and the old swimming pool kind of went down towards National Road from there. The aviary was still in the same place. Of course the White Palace was in the same place. The old swimming pool ran up close to the White Palace, between the tennis courts.

CNK: Now, when you were young it was a time of segregation, and there were only whites in the pools. Is that correct?

(307) GJ: Yes, that's pretty much correct. Yes, there -- Yes I got in on the integration, and that must have been my junior year in high school. That they integrated the schools then. But the -- Elm Grove was a coal mining town, coal mining area. And there were, there were black families out around there so -- We didn't mix much with them, no. As kids we played with everybody, you know,

just whoever was around we played with. But there wasn't much mixing at all.

CNK: But as a kid you would mix?

(319) GJ: Yes, where we would come across them and play with them. There was a -- There was several, there was several families lived down closer into Elm Grove that I recall that we would meet and know and, you know, knew who they were. Well, everybody knew everybody at those days. Although we didn't go to school and things with them, we were acquainted with them.

CNK: What was your consciousness of segregation being only whites in the pool or school or --

(328) GJ: I guess I never really thought of it. I know when we got into high school and - - I think there was a boy and a girl that came to school. And we had no problem with it. Of course they were grossly outnumbered. There was, there was -- Didn't appear to be any resentment or anything. It was more of a curiosity I think than anything. But they were -- What were the clubs, the High Ys that they were voted into and whatever. So they were assimilated real quickly.

CNK: The what club did you say?

GJ: I think it was High Y. I forget what that even was. It was kind of social club of some sort that the special kids go into. The high achievers got in. You got a friend there.

CNK: Were you a High Y member?

(346) GJ: No I wasn't. Hey Eric. ... No, that was more for the scholastic achievers, and I certainly wasn't a scholastic achiever. I was too busy to be bothered with books and those things.

CNK: Busy with?

GJ: Just anything! Anything. Making mischief and things.

CNK: But these two African-American students were voted in. Is that what you said?

(354) GJ: Yes, I think -- Yes they were -- Yes they were voted in or chosen, I forget how that came about. But they were, they were taken in with no resentments or anything that I recall.

CNK: Why would there have been just two do you suppose?

GJ: I don't know what the, what the deal was with that. But there was just a girl and a boy as I recall in that first year.

CNK: And then?

GJ: Well, I must have been -- I must have been a senior then because I think I -- Let me tie your shoe. Yes, your shoe's untied. You'll trip and fall.

CNK: You don't care, you fall anyway. You're used to falling. Say, "Thanks, George."

GJ: You're welcome. There you go.

CNK: So then you were a junior when the first --

(371) GJ: Well I'm thinking I must have been a senior because I don't remember anything about the next, about the next year. So I must have been a senior and was gone. Didn't worry or consider it, I guess.

CNK: Well, what other memories do you have of the city itself during those early years and up through high school?

(378) GJ: Well, the -- We were talking about that and looking at the pictures, the old pictures we had and downtown and everything. I can remember coming in on the bus. We didn't have, didn't have cars then. So I always rode in on the bus, and the buses had a -- Well the wheel well, the front right wheel well was in front of the door for some reason or other. And I always used to get the bus driver to let me sit up on that wheel well in front of the door. Then he'd let me flip the trap door on the toll collector thing. So that was a big deal for me. And we would come in on Saturdays, and I would remember my mother dragging me around through town and being about Eric's size or maybe a little bigger. I can just remember all the crowds and running into everybody and bumping butts. And at that age it was quite a thing. I

remember at Christmas time they always made it a big to-do. We would go into Stones and Cooley Bentz in South Wheeling. Cooley Bentz had a big Santa Claus and toy land. And Stones had a whole floor that they made a toy land out of. So that was the big shopping exhibition.

CNK: Remember other times of year, other than Christmas?

(404) GJ: Well, I don't remember a whole lot. I remember the Market House. My mother used to, used to get stewing chickens down at the Market House. And she would make homemade noodles which I loved. And we would get -- I just remember vaguely going in there and getting -- That's where we got the stewing chickens that she made the noodles out, that I love so.

CNK: What's a stewing chicken?

(412) GJ: It's just a, it's just a fat chicken. A chicken with a lot of fat on it. And she would use that fat to, I guess to make the noodles. I don't recall what, what the secret was, but she always had to get a stewing chicken which had a lot of big old yellow fat on it that she used to cook up and make these noodles with. So that was always a big to-do. And of course she would help us -- We would help her roll out the noodles and cut them. I always cut them -- I always cut them real wide because I liked them real wide. Everybody else liked them thin. So when I got to cut them, I would cut them real thick and real wide that I liked.

CNK: Who would you buy them from in the Market?

(426) GJ: I don't recall who the, who the butcher was in there and why. But I have to ask her that, what was so special about these chickens that she had, that she had to get them in there. But it was in the lower end of the Upper Market, I recall. I don't recall whose stall it was, but it was always crowded. And they had a lot of stalls. It was a busy time.

CNK: Did these chickens have feathers?

(434) GJ: No, they were all plucked and dressed and whatever. Now, we did -- That was one of my mischiefs. We did, we had chickens out in, out in Elm Grove

which was -- Well, it's against the law now. But we raised chickens and had gardens and whatever out there. And dad and I would butcher the chickens, and I would always take the chicken legs and after we cut them off, and chased my sisters with them. Pulling the tendons, you know, making the claws work! I recall that when you mentioned dressing chickens. I always did that down the basement.

CNK: Do you remember any of the other stalls in the Market House?

(447) GJ: Well, there was another one that had cornmeal mush. I always liked cornmeal mush. I still eat cornmeal mush out at Bob Evans, the only place you can get it now. But there was a place that made cornmeal mush. We used to get that in there. And that's, that's -- Well, there were a lot of vegetable bins and whatever or stalls and things in there. But we never -- We always raised our own. Eric's got his laces completely out of his shoes now.

CNK: Solved that problem!

CNK: Well, what was that like for a little kid? Were you always running off and having a great time there?

(461) GJ: No, I never did -- I never did much of that because -- Well, as I recall my mom always kept a pretty close rein on us running around town because it was so crowded and things. Now, my wife could tell you some stories about the mall because the store that has the -- It's right on the corner, it's the blue one right on the corner of Stone's alley. Her aunt and uncle owned -- There was a Kutzman's Bar there. And her aunt and uncle owned that Kutzman's Bar. And she -- They lived up over the bar, and she would go in and stay with her aunt as a little girl. So she wandered that whole block. She, she -- Her aunt would tell her, you know, she wouldn't go far or stay in that block. So she would, she knew that whole block around Stones and of course the Centre Market. Or not the Centre Market, but the Upper Market. Then she

was all over that. So she could probably tell you some stories about the Centre Market, or the Upper Market.

CNK: What is her name?

(480) GJ: Mary Ryan.

CNK: Mary -- Is she German then?

GJ: Yes, yes. Kutzman and Ryan and Millers were her family names.

CNK: How do you spell her last name?

GJ: Well, her last name is Ryan.

CNK: Her maiden --

GJ: R-Y-A-N. Her dad's sister married Kutzman. Her name was Bethy Kutzman. I don't remember what her husband's name was. It was German. It was German is all I know.

CNK: Ryan, is that not an Irish name?

(493) GJ: Well, yes -- Yes, Ryan is Irish. Yes, her father was Ryan. Her mother was a Miller, which was German. Yes, he came from County Cork in Ireland.

CNK: Is he living?

GJ: No, no. He died, he died a good while ago. He was one of 14, and his -- Well, they were raised in Coldwater, West Virginia, which is outside of Weston someplace. And he was one of 14, and one of his older brothers was the ambassador to France. And when he was -- He always told the story he was in the first world war. And he was over there, and somebody was reading the, I guess the equivalent of *Stars and Stripes Magazine*. Army magazine. And it said something about this Miller, Ambassador Miller coming to France. And he said, "Well, that was my brother." And somehow or other, he got in touch with him, and the ambassador was telling to come and see him. Well, his commanding officer or sergeant or whoever was in charge of him wouldn't let him go. So his brother found out about it, and they sent a limousine out to this camp to get him. And so he went riding off in a

limousine to visit the Ambassador of France. So he was quite the big shot when he got back.

CNK: Is your wife's mother, Mrs. Miller, living?

(526) GJ: No, no they're all dead now.

CNK: ... So she's the one with the Centre Market or Center Wheeling -- More recollections than you have?

GJ: Yes, I'm sure she would have. My wife Mary.

CNK: Anything else come to mind about Wheeling in those days?

(534) GJ: No, not a whole lot. Well, I guess one thing as a kid I remember that we talked about entertainment -- We didn't have a lot of entertainment. We had a very active, I guess you would call it semi-pro baseball league here in town. They played a lot of baseball and all the little areas had their baseball teams, and so Sundays were always a big baseball day. That everybody would get around, and they would play the various teams around the, around the city. So that was always a big recollection that we went over -- I never paid any attention to the baseball, but we would go with the crowds and carry on, run around the place.

CNK: Your family would go?

(550) GJ: Yes. Yes, dad was real interested in baseball, and I would just go over with him. The girls were never interested in -- But dad was interested in baseball so we would go over.

CNK: And this was all traveling by bus then?

GJ: Well, yes. The baseball field was in our area out there. Well, it's where Patterson Playground is right now, which is just two or three blocks over from where we lived. And that was another thing. My dad could whistle real loud. He put his hands in his mouth somehow and whistle. And when mom called, I never paid any attention. But when dad whistled, you better hit on home! And I could hear him clear over at that ball field, which is at least

three blocks away. I could hear him whistling. And boy I would high tail it home!

CNK: Well, would the other neighbors kind of watch out and say, "George, your family wants you home." That sort of thing?

(571) GJ: Oh yes. They -- The families were always pretty close, and everybody kind of watched out for everyone. And everybody knew everything. We had party line phones then, and so everybody knew who was dating who. The girls always used to get mad because they would be talking to their boyfriends and the phone would ring, and they knew 15 phones would be picked up. They were always complaining that "so and so was listening in again." So that was always a big commotion. Those were interesting times.

CNK: What about you? You weren't disturbed, you weren't involved in --

(585) GJ: No, I was, I was not interested in girls. That came much later! But no, that was, that was -- I was way too young then.

CNK: Were the trolley lines before your time then?

GJ: Yes. Well, I remember trolleys being in town. And I can remember the little trolley stops that were out in the road, you know, that passengers would get on. But I never rode on any trolleys. There were a lot of buses. We rode the buses then, but I didn't ride any trolleys. I think the trolleys were -- Well, they were on their way out then. And maybe they were still running up and down the river, but not out to Elm Grove. We had the buses.

CNK: What do the buses cost? Do you remember?

(603) GJ: I don't remember. I remember we used to -- I had to ride the public bus to go to school. And we used to buy books of tickets, but I don't remember what they cost. I think it was maybe 10 or 11 cents, something like that. But we had to buy, we had to buy the bus tickets. Of course you always paid when you -- Most of the time you -- I forget how that was. One way you paid going on, and one way you paid going off. I think when we went back to Elm Grove, you paid when you got off. And we always used to, used to hang out the

windows and jump out the windows before the bus got stopped so we wouldn't have to use our bus tickets or pay to get off the bus. Of course the buses were crowded with a bunch of kids and everybody was standing up, and so the bus driver couldn't see you. So we'd jump out the windows and wouldn't have to pay.

CNK: That's great.

(623) GJ: Yes, it's a wonder we didn't get run over.

CNK: So you jumped out of a moving bus?

GJ: Well, we would, we would hang as he was slowing down. So then when he'd stop, why we would get off and high tail it out of there. Or if he sees us or see us in the mirrors, why they would always chase us. So we would jump off and hit with a running start so we could fly away! I guess I got that honestly. Dad grew up in Elm Grove too, and when they were the trolleys. And he said they used to jump on the back of the trolleys and when it came time to get off, they'd just reach up and grab the wire and knock the arm off the trolley wire. And the trolley would stop. And of course the conductor got very unhappy about that and so he -- And then they would take off running. So I guess I got that honestly.

CNK: Anything else that you remember about Wheeling back then?

GJ: No.

CNK: The industry. Was it a dirty place?

(648) GJ: Yes. Yes, it was very dirty. There -- You had to paint your porch every year because the soot would react with the rain and the snow and would eat right through the paint. And we used to make snowcones and what have you out of snow. And of course you had to brush all soot, get down some before you get to the clean stuff, to eat the snow. But yes, everybody -- When I was growing up, everybody had coal furnaces and so it was, it was dirty. And of course painful memories about that was that everybody dumped their ashes in the alleyways. They didn't pave the alleyways, so everybody dumped their ashes

in the alleyways. And of course running around and falling, I still have cinders in my knees from falling. And I remember having to -- Mom would drag me down to old Doc Hazlett on National Road, and he would get the green soap and scrub brushes out and scrub the, scrub the cinders out of my skinned up knees. It gives me chills to think of it! It was -- But I was always doing that. Always falling and all the scrapes that kids get into.

CNK: Was the river freezing then?

(681) GJ: I remember the creeks freezing. We used to go down and ice skate on the creeks. I have seen the river frozen, but I never, never -- But that's actually been in later years that I've seen it frozen, cold enough to freeze over. But certainly not thick enough to walk on with all the barge traffic and things. They would keep it busted up. But I have seen it frozen over.

CNK: But Wheeling Creek would freeze?

(694) GJ: Yes, Wheeling Creek would freeze. We would skate on Wheeling Creek down at the, down at the places where it was thick enough. And of course we never cared whether it was thick enough. We would go ice skating and of course, we would break through and it was never that deep that we, that they had to worry about anything. But we were in that creek all the time.

CNK: Kids.

GJ: Yes. Well, going to Bridge Street -- When I went to Bridge Street School, we used to -- The only bridge there, the bridge there at Monument Place was not there. So we had to walk down through where TCI is across that Junior Avenue bridge. And we never wanted to walk that far, so we always built bridges across the creek. And just laid planks and branches and whatever and of course by the time you got down that far, there was more, there was more sewage running into it. And my mother used to give me hell all the time because always going across it you'd slip off and end up with a foot full of muck and mud and sewage and whatever! So I was always getting the dickens for that. And of course everybody was concerned about polio at that

time too. And they were concerned about, about -- They all used to say you'd get polio from the creek, but I never did.

CNK: Do you remember the epidemic?

(732) GJ: Yes. Yes. Yes, there was, there was a girl up at the top of Marshall Avenue that was a good friend of my sister's, got polio. And she was in the iron lung and eventually died of it. But -- So it was familiar to us.

CNK: What precautions were taken for you? Any?

(742) GJ: Oh, my mother -- I never took any, but my mother always used to give us hell about staying out of the creek. That was the, the popular, or what they thought was the popular place to get polio. But it never bothered us.

(side two) GJ: Was quarantines and things like that. I remember houses being quarantined. That they wouldn't allow visitors in, and we had to stay away from. But that's about it. I remember the doctors used to come to the house, make house calls at the time. But we were always pretty healthy and never had any major problems. I was, I was a croupy kid. I always had what they called the croup. And I guess it was just, you would just develop a lot of fluid and phlegm and whatever. And I remember my mother would make a tent of bed sheets and put steaming water with Vicks and all sorts of gloop in it to breathe. I'd have crouping fits, coughing fits that they called the croup. I remember she used to put hot -- It was like -- I remember it was a black salve that she would, she would heat up and put hot rags on my chest that stunk like crazy. I don't remember what it was. Some -- But I remember black salve with some sort of -- She used to smear me with. I have no idea what it was.

CNK: But you were in the tent?

(017) GJ: Yes. Yes, I'd be in the -- She'd make a tent out of the headboard and put boiling water in there with Vicks and all sorts of menthols and things to get me over these coughing fits.

CNK: How old would you be?

GJ: Oh, I was probably 8 or 10 or something like that.

CNK: Well developed?

GJ: Yes, that I remember. I don't know whatever brought it on or whatever cured it or what. But that was about the only thing that I recall illnesses. I never had a broken -- We were very fortunate. We never had any major industries, or injuries. My mother had the first broken arm in the family. And that's -- We went ice skating. That was after I got out of the service. It was nieces and nephews. She was probably 65 or 70 at the time. She fell down, broke her wrist. Was the only broken arm we ever had in the place. But I had numerous scrapes and bangs and -- But that was only major trauma we ever had. We were down on the creek bank one time and throwing stuff in the river, in the creek. And I don't know how, my sister was throwing the bottles, Coke bottle somehow or other. And anyhow, she hit me in the head with it. I had to get a, get a clamp or two in my cheekbone. So we went flying up the street with blood pouring out of me. But that was the only major trauma I guess we ever really had.

CNK: Sounds exciting!

(039) GJ: Yes. Yes, all these ... things with kids.

CNK: Well then you finished high school.

GJ: Yes, then I went -- Well I started out at Wheeling College in the first class out at Wheeling College just to satisfy my folks. Dad was the first one in his family to go to college, but he never finished. And then I was the first one to graduate from college. After I came back from the service, I went, I went back to Wheeling College and then finished up down at WVU.

CNK: What did you study there?

GJ: Electrical engineering.

CNK: Not history?

(049) GJ: No. No, really I was never, never very interested in history. I enjoyed reading some, but -- Yes, until we got involved in this, I guess -- Well, the

older you get I think, the more you become interested in, in your surroundings and your history. That's how it got started, I guess.

CNK: So after WVU, you then began a career in electrical engineering?

GJ: Right. Right. I went to work at Westinghouse in Pittsburgh. Then I went to Bacarack Instruments. Then I came back and worked -- We come back to Wheeling, and I went to work for Wheeling Steel down at the Benwood plant.

CNK: When did you come back to Wheeling?

(060) GJ: In -- When was that? Sixty-nine. Sixty-eight. Sixty-eight or nine.

CNK: Was it work that brought you back?

GJ: No, it was the fact -- I had gotten married while I was in school, and, as I said, when we went to Pittsburgh, we were living up there. We were spending all our time traveling back and forth to Wheeling. We were spending weekends here just because both of us were from Wheeling. And we finally decided we either have to quit coming home so much or come home. So we came home.

CNK: And then you were saying ... your job?

(067) GJ: Oh, I went to work for Wheeling Steel. And then, then I worked down there till '73. And then I went with the electric company. And I've been there ever since.

CNK: What was it like working for Wheeling Steel?

GJ: It was, it was very interesting. I worked as a, in their plant engineering department. So I was just involved with all the millions of projects to running the pipe mill down there from putting in new equipment to doing lighting in the field. You know, fences, televisions, you know. Just a myriad of things to, that takes with running a plant. But -- So that was interesting. But then we went to work for the electric company.

CNK: What do you do there?

(080) GJ: I handle the major commercial and industrial accounts for Wheeling Electric. So I handle all the contracts and the new services and the negotiations and

just all the customer service work that goes with that. So anything PPG needs, why they call George.

CNK: PPG?

GJ: Yes. Yes, we go clear down to Mobay and PPG and down below, or down above New Martinsville.

CNK: What is PPG?

GJ: Pittsburgh Plate Glass. They have a big chlorine plant down --

CNK: So you're -- You no longer work with the appliances and machinery?

(089) GJ: No. No, it's strictly customer service work and what those companies need for, you know, to encourage them for more electric use and help them with their problems.

CNK: Have you raised a family here in Wheeling?

GJ: Yes. Yes, we have two girls and a boy. And they're all grown. And gone because there aren't any jobs here. And yes, it was a great place to raise a family.

CNK: How so?

(096) GJ: It's, it's safe and we've always felt comfortable. And we know everybody and everybody knows us. I always told the kids, "No matter where you are, what you're doing, somebody I know knows you. So behave yourself!" And, and there's -- The school systems are great. And it's just a, it's a nice place to raise kids. If only we had some jobs to keep them here. Right now, two of them are in Florida. I have one home, but she's looking for a job. Who knows where she'll end up.

CNK: So tell me the story of The Point.

(106) GJ: Well, this was, was Chip's idea. And since I work with Chip in the electric company, I've just gotten, gotten interested in it. And we've just gotten -- He had the vision and so Craig O'Leary and myself and Chip have gotten together. We collaborate on ideas, and three heads are better than one. And

we've come up with a lot of good ideas and have helped him considerably, I think.

CNK: What was the vision, and what enticed you about it?

(113) GJ: Well, Chip -- Chip actually had the vision, and he brought me up here one day and wanted to show me something. And I come through that front door, and there was nothing but a hole in the wall there and a nice sun shiny day. And I just wowed. It just knocked my socks off. And I said, "That is a million dollar view." And so it preceded from there to how can we make it a better place to show people and sell Wheeling and help Wheeling. And that's, that's really the effort behind it. We're trying to get something to, to sell Wheeling because we all had been born and raised here, and we realize we need the industry and activity up here to keep it going. So that's our vision behind it. So we're, we're trying to get people interested in it, and we're breaking new ground every day. And we get somebody, somebody new up here to see and to share our experience and our vision of it. So it's progressing.

CNK: Well, you've been a friend of Wheeling for a long time then?

(131) GJ: Yes, and I belonged to the Friends of Wheeling for, oh, several years now. So I've got that portion of it also that helps entice me to help more up here. So we're -- We look at the Friends of Wheeling as more interested in the bricks of mortar and of, with buildings and things. But this is a overlook and a vision and more a selling of the entire area, not just the bricks and mortar.

CNK: Selling toward what end?

(136) GJ: Industry. Tourism. Right now we're concentrating more on tourism because that's our industry now that we've lost the coal and the steel. But ultimately, we hope we can, we can get people, tourists out here that are interested in bringing some of that industry back to Wheeling. Or some industries back to Wheeling. So we can sell it from an economic development point of view.

CNK: Do you dream about your kids coming back here?

(145) GJ: Oh, we'd like to have them back. But I don't, I don't think they will ever be back. Who knows? They could.

CNK: You say that because of the economy?

GJ: Yes, yes. So hopefully -- We've had a great life here. So I'd like to see the kids have it.

CNK: What would you -- What would you say about this town to someone who's never been here? Why'd you come back, and why do you stay? Why do you want your kids to be here and --

(154) GJ: Well, I always said that the home is -- Home is home no matter where in the hell it is. Your roots are here, and we all like to continue those things.

CNK: Thanks.

GJ: Sure.