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Irene Pavlyshyn interview, 30 October 2003

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Tremont
Oral History Project
Interview with Irene Pavlyshyn
Interview by Duane Sycz
October 30, 2003
11:00 AM
Cleveland, Ohio

Duane Sycz: Okay, Can you please tell me what your name is and can you spell it for me?

Irene Pavlyshyn: My name is Irene Pavlyshyn. That's spelled P-a-v-l-y-s-h-y-n.

Ds: Thank you.

Ds: We lived there Hhm, What are your, some of your early childhood memories of growing up in Tremont?

IP: Being kind a of, being kind a surrounded with many friends. Lots of outdoors activities, lots of playing. Not necessary sports, because unless you went to the park or unless you went to the school yard there wasn't ample space to have anything like baseball games or things like that. But the, the kind of sports or kind of games that girls would be involved in like hopscotch, and tag, hide and go seek things like that.

Ds: Okay,

Ds: When did your parents move to Tremont? And do you know why they moved to that area?

IP: Well, they moved to the area, in they came to this country in 1912 and they settled in that area. They didn't live in any other section of Cleveland and primarily because the church was there. And other people of their nationalities were there and some relatives that had come before them , came to Tremont and this is the reason that they were there.

Ds: So do you have a lot of relatives that lived in that area?

IP: Their were, their aren't anymore, but they were not any close relatives they were people that, let's say were from the same village that my mother and father were and we called them aunt's and uncle's, even though they weren't actually blood relatives But as far as blood relatives , there weren't to many,because I guess when they came from the old country there was just a few of them that were ambitious enough or adventurous enough to come from the old country, to America.

Ds: Do you remember what languages they spoke?

IP: They spoke Ukrainian and they were able to speak Polish.

DS: Did they teach you how to speak those languages?

IP: I don't know weather it was a mutual learning from them or weather we did go to Ukrainian school and we learned a lot about writing and reading the language ,but primarily we learned from home and church.

DS: Did your friends speak that language? Or

IP: Yes, they did to, so we were able to converse with our friends however we never did, we never used the Ukrainian language in speaking with our friends. It was just primarily at home and in church.

DS: The neighborhood that you grew up in, were there a lot of different nationalities? And can you name some.

IP: Well, how big of a neighborhood do you mean? Do you mean within my block or do you mean within five or six blocks?

DS: Say three or four blocks?

IP: Within three or four blocks there were Ukrainians, there were Polish, Russians, there was some Slovaks, but that in our immediate area that's about all that there were.

DS: Did they all speak English or did they all speak their native language?

IP: No, they all spoke English, the mother and father's of course spoke there native language and to some extent some of those mothers and fathers did not speak English to well, but the children of course did because of the school.

DS: Can you tell me something about the house you grew up in? Was it a very large house or a small house?

IP: Well, it was a two family house .I mean a two story house and my father had a grocery store and later a bar in the front. In the back was living quarters and upstairs there was two sets of living quarters.

DS: What was your sleeping arrangements with your sister?

IP: We shared a bedroom.

DS: Did that cause any problems?

IP: The usual problems.[laughter] When girls are growing up or boys I suppose, just a few arguments.

DS: Did you argue over clothes?

IP: Exactly, yeah exactly.

DS: Did you ever get married?

IP: Yes I'm married. Not when I was in that area, but when I have moved out of that area.

DS: Do you remember where your reception was at and your wedding?

IP: Oh yes, my reception was at Bessie Miller's and my wedding was at Saint Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church on West Eleventh.

DS: Do you remember what kind of food was served at the reception?

IP: Yeah, Bessie Pro Miller's was noted for there chicken dinners, so there was it wasn't an ethnic type of cuisine. It was just a regular chicken dinner with potatoes and so forth.

DS: Do you remember what type of music they played?

IP: Yeah, yes they played all types of music. They played polkas of course for the dancing and they played a few foxtrots, but primarily polkas.

DS: Where did your parents work? And did both your parents work?

IP: My mother worked before she was married. She worked in a bakery, not a bakery, but she worked for Hallie's Brothers and Hallie's Brothers had a cafeteria for their employees and she worked there in the bakery. She worked there for a while and then she worked, I believe that's all really.

DS: Was that unusual for a woman to work?

IP: No, no not at all .In fact, some woman a lot of woman worked after they were married, but my mother after she was married, my father as I said owned the store, so she helped out and that was where she worked. My father worked for awhile at city hospital. He was a clerk there. And then he had a chance to move back to, he had come from New York with his sister when he was single and he had a chance to move back to New York with her, because she was moving back, but he decided to stay here. And after he stayed here he got a good job at city hospital and then he married my mother and bought this property. Bought the store.

DS: So both parents worked the store?

IP: Yes, Hmm

DS: When you were a child where did you guys play?

IP: Oh, we played in our backyard. We had a small backyard and we played out on the street, not the street, but the sidewalks and things like rollerskating and you know we would go back and fourth and play games there on the sidewalk. But that was about it, unless we would go sometimes especially we would go to Brookside Park.

DS: What types of games did you play?

IP: We played hopscotch, tag, hide and go seek, we played with dolls. We played make believe you know dressing up and things like that.

DS: Right

DS: Where did you go to church at?

IP: We went to Saint Peter and Paul .It was a Ukrainian Catholic Church.

DS: When you went to church, did you with your family? Or did you go with groups of people? Did you go with your neighbors?

IP: No, we went with my ... It was very close so often times we went alone, but most of the time we went with our folks.

DS: Hmm, When you went to church what language was mass said in?

IP: The language was at the beginning all Ukrainian, but then later on they introduced in English service or English mass and we used to go to that one.

DS: Did you understand the mass when it was said?

IP: In Ukrainian?

DS: Yes

IP: After a while, yes. We had books and there was a translation so you understood what was going on.

DS: When you were growing up as a child what was your favorite food?

IP: Oh golly, I think noodles. [laughter] I like noodles all my life, but I like the perogis, the stuff cabbage, I like pork chops, love chicken soup and that's about it.

DS: Were these dishes always made by your mother?

IP: Yes

DS: What types of food did she cook that you didn't like?

IP: Well, occasionally she would hmm You know I can't think of any food she cooked that we did not like. She really tried to please us all the time, but sometimes she gave my father some things we didn't eat such as pigs feet and things like that. That were not...didn't appeal to us.

DS: Did your mother ...Did she teach you to cook? Did she pass on the trade?

IP: Somewhat, but not really. Not to much.

DS: When did you or your parents, where did you grocery shop?

IP: Oh we had a store about a half block away. It was a grocery store, it was a mom and pop store. It was a meat market and they had vegetables and produce.

DS: How often did you go shopping?

IP: Probably daily, there was always something we had to get.

DS: Did you always walk?

IP: Oh, yes.

DS: Did you ever go to the West Side Market?

IP: Oh, yes. We used to go there on Saturday's with my father.

DS: Do you remember what types of food you bought at the West Side Market?

IP: Oh, we bought certain kinds of breads and rolls and often times there were pork, pork tender line. We used to go to the chicken place where they had live chickens you could pick out and then bring that chicken home after he was killed and dressed.[laughter]

DS: How did you get to the West Side Market? By trolley?

IP: My father had a car.

Ds: So you drove?

IP: Yes, we drove.

DS: What kind of food was served during holidays and celebrations? Were there certain foods served during Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter?

IP: Well, not Thanksgiving, but during Easter there was always kielbasha, you might know about that and always eggs and always horse radish made with beats that was a popular dish at that time to. At Christmas time there would be the perogis and the stuffed cabbage and peas and all those would be meatless dishes for Christmas.

DS: When some of the bridges were out did that effect your shopping? Going to the West Side Market?

IP: Well you know I'm trying to think if there was.. it was... No the Abby bridge was always there so were able to go to the West Side Market. And it wasn't I think it was during the war that the viaduct the central viaduct was demolished at that time so it really didn't affect us, because by that time we had already moved, it was during the war.

DS: What was dating like when you were a teenager?

IP: Well, let's see. A little different than it is now, it seems like now people meet each other in places .In that time a boy came to your house and he was introduced to your parents and then we went out from that point and then he returned came back and returned you to your home. Now, I think it's just I'll meet you down at the corner and you know and everybody is on their own.

DS: Did you go on group dates? Or were they all individual dates?

IP: They weren't individual dates very much, but most of all they were group dates.

DS: Where did you go on dates? What was a common place?

IP: We would go to Dairy Dell, we would go to a basketball game at the high school or a football game or a dance, a school dance, a movie, that was pretty much about it.

DS: Did you have any favorite movies you can remember?

IP: Oh, I liked Humphrey Bogart a lot and of course Clark Gable and Mae West and some early ones James Cagney, we really spent a lot of time in the movies.

DS: Do you remember how much it costs to go to the movies?

IP: Well, I know when we would splurge and go downtown. See we were very close to town, so we would just go on the streetcar and go down to the Palace. That would be 35 cents before noon and you had a movie plus the vaudeville show at that time, but for the local show it was probably about 15 cents.

DS: What can you remember about Lincoln Park?

IP: Lincoln Park was a good place to cut through. We always used to cut through to go to West 14th, but we didn't spend a lot of time in Lincoln Park, actually there was really nothing there, but a park and there were no ball fields or diamonds or anything like that. They did have a pool in the middle where the gazebo is now, but we didn't go there, if we went swimming at all we went to Edgewater or to Brookside.

DS: What High School did you go to?

IP: Lincoln High

DS: What year did you graduate?

IP: January of 41.

DS: What was your favorite subject s in school?

IP: I like journalism, I liked English, I liked foreign languages, I liked biology.

DS: Were there any classes you didn't like?

IP: I didn't care for math.

DS: Do you think Tremont was a good place to grow up as a child?

IP: Oh, yes.

DS: Was it... basically why?

IP: Well, it was probably ...it was probably the time, because I'm sure in other neighborhoods people felt that way to, but there was a closeness to the people that were there, you had a lot of good friends you could count on, there was always somebody to do something with and for the most part the people were honest and hard working , and they were quite interested keeping up the neighborhood.

DS: Good Teachers?

IP: Yes, good teachers

DS: Good school system?

IP: Yes, good school system.

DS: How has Tremont changed now? And has it for the better or for the worse?

IP: Well there was a period of time I think it was worse, because when people left Tremont, then groups of people came in that were not used to the neighborhood and maybe there was more poverty at that time and there wasn't that much attention paid to the children, I think good many of the people probably had to work, although I shouldn't say that, because in my day there were many mothers that worked you know and yet the children were well behaved. Not to say there wasn't any kind of delinquency because there was you know, but now of course it's like Ohio City it's trendy in some places and not in others, you know.

DS: Do you go back there often to visit?

IP: Not to visit, but to go to the restaurants.

DS: Speaking of the restaurants, what do you think of all the new restaurants in that area? Is that a good thing?

IP: I think it's a good thing because it's bringing people back into the neighborhood and hmm, although I think a lot of the people that live in the neighborhood, I've heard them express the view that people are just coming here to eat and they don't care anything else about the neighborhood and they just go. I suppose there is a certain amount of that, but I think the neighborhood is improved.

DS: Do most of the residents that live there now, can they afford to eat at all these new restaurants?

IP: Probably not, probably not.

DS: So there probably...

IP: They probably just look at these places where people come in from out of the city and out of the neighborhood to eat and I don't know how much the people in the neighborhood are benefiting from that, unless they have a shop like the delicatessen that they have there on 11th street and they really don't have any gift shops or anything as such, but it seems there is more of a focus on the neighborhood and I think that is good. I think when people are looking to upgrade the neighborhood I think it's always good for the residents.

DS: What do you think about all the new houses and the expensive condominiums being built there?

IP: Well, I guess they have a section there where ordinary houses on, I think West 7th street I think that's fine. The condos I've been in some of them and there kind a way out. And you know. I guess they are good for the neighborhood, because what would be the alternative you know if people didn't come in and try to upgrade the neighborhood. You know it might just become a neighborhood of blight, but on the other hand, some of these places are really too much. [laughter]

DS: The new condos, how big are they?

IP: Well, the new condos I have been in several of them and there the town houses that are three stories. They are not overly huge, hmm there good for a couple, you know, but not necessarily for a family that would be raising children.

DS: What types of people are buying these houses?

IP: I think , I think, Yuppies, you know people that have nice incomes and both are working.

DS: What do you think drove them to the Tremont area?

IP: I think the fact they started with the restaurants. And then some of the people that are the real estate people, you know the builders, I think they saw an opportunity to build something close to town for people to work in town and come there and I think that' what probably drew it.

DS: What was it like during the Depression? Do you have any memories?

IP: Well, everything was, you know, people were very careful about what they bought if they could buy anything and they were careful about the clothes they wore to take good care about the things they had, because it wouldn't be placed in a hurry. There weren't to many opportunities for recreation except recreation at home. A lot of people did a lot of reading and a lot of board games.

DS: What type of board games?

IP: Well, like monopoly, checkers, Chinese checkers, things like that.

DS: Going back to your dad's store, what do you remember about the store?

IP: Well, it was at first a grocery store and delicatessen and then I remember my mother working there. And remember my father working there and when we came home from school we go into the store and there would be four or five steps that would go back into our living quarters. So we didn't spend a awful lot of time, we spent time in the store in the evening, because it was open quite late as I remember. And then later on when prohibition was repealed, my father applied for a liquor license and then from then on he had a bar there. That I remember well, because at that time I was probably close to becoming a teenager and the same thing was true. You know, we would come through the bar. And there were all neighborhood trade, they were very few people that came from out of the neighborhood, there were people that worked in the steel mills for instance and would walk up and on their way up to catch the bus or streetcar maybe, they would have their favorite bars to stop in and they either stop in our bar or maybe the one

on the corner that belonged to my uncle or maybe the one on the next block, because there was a number of bars, people drank in those days.[laughter]

DS: When it was a grocery store can you remember what types of food you sold?

IP: Oh, a lot of canned stuff. A lot of cans. And then we would have there was a Jewish bakery that delivered bread, fresh bread and roles, and we would carry those. It was primarily just groceries.

DS: Did you have to work to make any extra money at all?

IP: There, I worked at the store. Yeah, I worked when I was in high school, but that was just for a short time.

DS: When you went shopping for clothes was that in the neighborhood or did you have to go downtown or elsewhere?

IP: Well, a the central viaduct was there and it was very easy to get into town and from the times we were maybe thirteen or fourteen we went downtown to buy our own clothes. We were able to do that. Because you know, we had our favorite stores like May company and Higbee's so at first my mother would go with us and help us to select things, but after a while when you became a teenager, why you picked your own things more or less. Although there was a local, on our street there was a department store.

DS: When you went downtown, did you guys take a car?

IP: We took a streetcar.

DS: Do you remember how much that costs?

IP: I think it was, I think it must of been about five cents. Five or ten cents.

DS: How long did it take you to get downtown?

IP: Probably about ten or fifteen minutes.

DS: Was it like a social event going shopping or did you go shopping and come right back?

IP: Probably go shopping and come right back. It was social event when we went to the movie, when we went to the Palace or often times we would stop on the square where the trolley left you off and walked to Playhouse Square. So there was a quite of bit walking in town.

DS: Do you remember going to any amusement parks when you were younger?

IP: Oh, yes. Yeah, we went to Euclid Beach Puritas Springs, Geauga Lake, oh what else was there, that's about it, those three.

DS: What can you remember about each park?

IP: Puritas Spring had a very nice...I'm going to back up. Euclid Beach was probably the best because it was the nicest, it was the largest and I can remember they had a nice carousal there. It was not a carousal as such, that little kid would like, they called it a racing, they had all the animals were hmm racing carousal.

DS: It was like a racing carousal, I believe Cedar Point owns that ride right now.

IP: Okay, Yes, I think that's right. I think they did. That was a special treat you know, because that was a little more advanced than the other and you were always ahead of somebody else. And then the Ferris wheel they had a very nice used to call it the bug that went around and at a certain point there would be a curtain, kind of a tarp that would enclose the cars. And then you would be in the dark and going around and then after awhile it was called a caterpillar. It just opened up and there you were. The Ferris wheel and of course the old mill race, you know the one that went into the water that was a favorite to.

DS: Do you remember riding the flying turns?

IP: One time only, I didn't go in for any of that, but the flying turns were very exciting, very exciting.

DS: Do you remember the funhouse?

IP: Oh, yeah the funhouse. Yeah, not to much what it was like except that we went in and there was that huge woman that was standing, that picture or statue of the woman laughing, I remember that.

IP: As far as Puritas Spring there wasn't anything especially there I can remember. It had the regular, you know the Ferris wheel, the carousal, but nothing outstanding, they had a terrific roller coaster there, but I never rode, but everybody said it was the best.[laughing]

DS: Do you remember... Did you go there on dates or with families?

IP: No, with family.

DS: Do you remember what types of food you guys would eat there? Did you buy your food or did you bring picnics?

IP: Well, when we went to Geauga Lake we had often went by train. We'd go by train.

DS: Do you remember how long that took to get there?

IP: Probably, probably an hour I would say. And we would always take a picnic lunch with us and we would eat in an wooded area. And from that point we went across, not across the lake, but around the lake to the amusement park and I guess that's where ... I don't know what there is now probably, Six flags?

DS: Probably,

IP: Yeah

DS: Do you remember what types of food you guys packed?

IP: Oh yeah, sandwiches, cookies, hard boiled eggs, hmm probably coke-a-cola something like that.

DS: Did you ever buy stuff inside the park or was it mostly brought from home?

IP: No, when we got to the park there was always be ice cream. We would buy or popcorn maybe something to drink and at Euclid Beach we didn't bring anything we just ate there and often times hot dogs or hamburgers, taffy and then of course we went to Cedar Point I forgot to mention that. We went by boat to Cedar Point.

DS: How long did that take?

IP: It probably took about three to four hours.

DS: That was a very long day.

IP: Very long day. Yeah and we would take things with us to eat there to because it was a long trip and we would come to the end of the pier, and that area where frontier land is now at Cedar Point, that's where the boat would let you off. And there was a pier and there was a long walk into the... long walk into the park.

DS: Did you enjoy Cedar Point?

IP: Oh yes, yeah, the boat ride was good and in fact I think I remember the boat ride and the walking more than I do the park itself.

DS: It was more of a social event? It was an event itself just to get there.?

IP: Yes that's right

DS: All right. I'm going to change the side of the tape.

DS: Going back to Tremont hmm, Was crime a problem there? Were there any gangs?

IP: Yes there were. I'm sure there was crime and were gangs in fact after I moved out of the area, I moved into an neighborhood where a former teacher at Tremont lived. And I got to know her pretty well and she talked about a group of people from the University of Chicago having come to the area and did a study of the Tremont area. And they said that during that time during the time we went to school, that area had more juvenile delinquency than any other place in the country. Now that was hard for me to believe.

DS: What do you think contributed to that?

IP: Well, I think a lot of times, I think poverty to begin with and the fact that the mother and father were away for long periods of time and had to work. There were many children and they published their results in a book that was called *Midspires and Stacks*. And they kept that for a long time in a public library downtown in their stacks area, you know, where you had to get permission to take those books out. And when I was a student at Western Reserve I was taking a course in Recreation and our teacher at the time told us about this. She said if you would like to go to the library and get the book and read about it and find out what was going on at the time. Well, it was a real eye opener, because I had no idea, no idea that all of this crime and the gangs were in the area.

DS: They were in the area, but they really didn't affect you?

IP: They didn't affect. Didn't affect. Probably something good to say about the way we were brought up, because for one thing we never cussed at home, we didn't cheat, we didn't steal, we didn't do anything like that. I think it was the influence of the home and the church and the teacher to that kept the certain group within the straight and narrow. But I remember this woman I was telling you, the woman teacher that I was telling you about, that lived in the area. In fact, she lived in this area, she said at that time the principle of the school would not permit any of her teachers to read that book. They were interested in reading about it, because of course the people from University of Chicago had come and done the kind of interviews that your doing and they were interested in knowing the outcome of that. And what was being written. The principle was very reluctant she wouldn't allow them to read it. Of course they could read it on their own if they wanted to, because she was afraid they would be a little fearful about the area they were teaching in. So, that was always interesting to me. I read the book, and as I say it was really an eye opener, because it talked about gangs from the south side having fights with gangs from the East side. You know there coming together.

DS: What did they fight about?

IP: Well, they probably fought about territory. Fought about girls, girlfriends and that kind of thing and just to show, I guess to show that this was their area and you were not to come in this area. that kind of thing. I wonder if that book is still around? [Irene laughs]

DS: When you were a child, did your parents take you on vacation anywhere?

IP: Yes, we had an aunt that lived in New York. So about every year or two we would go.

DS: Was this New York City?

IP: One aunt lived in the outskirts in a small town in New York and the other one lived in New York City. And then we generally we went to a cottage for a week. And that would be in Willoughby or Willoughby on the lake some place out East. And in those days it wasn't an area where a lot of people lived they just had little cottages and some people would rent them out.

DS: Did you go with friends or immediate family?

IP: Just the immediate family and probably an aunt or two would come along , and a cousin.

DS: What did you do to entertain yourself?

IP: Swim, yeah played games.

DS: Swimming in a pool?

IP: No, swimming in a lake. It was close to Lake Erie.

DS: Do you remember when Carl Stokes became mayor?

IP: Yeah.

DS: What can you tell me about that, was there any problems since he was an African-American?

IP: No I don't think so. I think by the time he became mayor. I think it was pretty generally accepted I think. I don't remember any problems that there were.

DS: Is there anything else you would like to add?

IP: Well, I think it's a wonderful thing that your doing, because it helps to bring back memories and it also helps I think, helping people understand what went on before.

DS: Do you think it was a better place to live back then than it is now?

IP: Oh Yes. Yeah, definitely.

DS: Why do you say that?

IP: Well, I think because there was a sense of unity in the neighborhood there and now there are two definite types of people there. There are people living in the condos and then the ones patronizing places like Lola's and Fat Cat's and things like that. And the people that are just residents of the area

DS: Do you think it was more family oriented years ago? And now it's not so much family oriented?

IP: Yeah, but I don't think particularly this is just in the Tremont neighborhood, I think it's that way, I think it's the sign of the times.

DS: You grew up in the Tremont area, how long did you live there?

IP: We lived there, I think I was nineteen when I moved into this area.

DS: Why did you move away from the Tremont area?

IP: Well, people were moving away from the area. People were moving out to Parma and Brooklyn.

DS: Do you know why they were moving out?

IP: Probably, just because they felt it was time to move on and to have a better home.

DS: So you're saying they were bigger and better outside Tremont?

IP: Yes, I wouldn't say anything for the school system because I think the school system was good. It was the same school system here that was there. And in some respects, you know, I think the school system was very good there. For instance, we always had two periods of English everyday, everyday. And you know, as far as grammar and reading and understanding and sentence structure and things like that. I think we had a very, very good background.

DS: Did many of your friends go to private school or was it all public school?

IP: Public and parochial There were several parochial schools in the neighborhood.

DS: Do you think they got a better education going to private school?

IP: Do you mean parochial school? [Duane nods his head yes] No I don't think so.

DS: Do you think the school system has changed now, where it's not as good?

IP: Yes, I'm afraid so [Irene laughs] I'm afraid so, but I think it's turning around.

DS: What do you think they can do to change it to make it like it used to be?

IP: More involvement by the parents I think. That's not to say there is no involvement because my daughter teaches in the Cleveland system and she teaches in the Harvard, Lee area. And those parents are very involved in their children school. But I think some of the areas in some of the schools throughout the city I think there's not enough involvement of the parents.

DS: All right. Thank you very much.

End of interview.

