**Mark Souther** [00:00:00] Today's June 18, 2011. My name is Mark Souther doing an interview for the Coventry Reunion. Could you state your name for the record?

**Daniel Landau** [00:00:12] Yes, it's Daniel Landau.

**Mark Souther** [00:00:15] Okay. Thank you. And I wanted to... You mentioned before we started the interview that you comment on the late 1960s and early 1970s. I wonder if you could tell me how you would describe the Coventry in the late 1960s.

**Daniel Landau** [00:00:32] Well, it actually had a reputation as being the Haight-Ashbury of the Midwest, and that's pretty much what it was. It was a former ethnic neighborhood, mostly Jewish neighborhood, and it was going through a transformation. The youth culture was moving in and there were a lot of stores that catered to the youth culture. And word was that it was known all over the country. People who were going from coast to coast and passing through would make a point of stopping off here and checking out the scene.

**Mark Souther** [00:01:09] Did you ever meet any of those people who were passing through from far away?

**Daniel Landau** [00:01:12] Yes, I did. I kind of hung out on the street a lot. I worked in a number of different businesses. And also my social life was pretty much just hanging out on the street and talking to people. And I met people that were passing through. In fact, a couple of occasions people would ask if there was... if I knew of some place where they could sleep for the night or crash. And I lived in a house with a bunch of friends of mine, and we would, you know, it's a lot of people living there anyway, so one more usually didn't make any difference.

**Mark Souther** [00:01:46] Where was the farthest away place that you recall meeting someone from on the street at that time?

**Daniel Landau** [00:01:54] California. L.A. A woman that was on her way to New York City, and she was just passing through. And she had heard about Coventry. And she spent the night and got up in the morning and was... We drove her out to the freeway and she was hitchhiking to New York.

**Mark Souther** [00:02:16] What were some of the businesses that you frequented right around 1970, give or take?

**Daniel Landau** [00:02:23] Well, frequented or worked at, or both?

**Mark Souther** [00:02:29] Actually, why you don't tell me about the places you worked?

**Daniel Landau** [00:02:30] Well, the first place I worked was at Pee Wee's Bike Shop, which was on the corner of Hampshire and Coventry. And it was a tiny little, you know, single owner bike shop. And I was... It was one of my first real jobs, actually, and I was a bicycle mechanic. And then I went from there, a number of different places that I worked. One place a lot of people worked was the Heights Art Theater. And I worked as a ticket taker there. They had midnight movies every weekend and which was just a kind of an eclectic mix of short films and it would draw a counterculture crowd and so I was like one big party and it was... it didn't really feel like working. I worked at a store called Cargo, which was an import store, kind of along the lines of some of the chain import stores but this was a little nicer because it was just a single mom and pop operation and had really unusual merchandise, and they had a wine shop in the back called Earth Wine that actually had a very good selection of European and American wines. And I worked there. That's where I first started to learn about fine wines. I also worked at a famous restaurant in Coventry called Tommy's that everybody pretty much knows about. And when Tommy moved from his original location in the old Ace Drugstore to his location in which is what is now Mac's Backs bookstore, because I had worked on the streets for so long, I had eaten at Tommy's at least once every day for lunch, and so I already knew the menu and everything and I had been asking Tommy about the possibility of working there. So he hired me as a cook. And so I... and trained me how to do the menu and I worked for Tommy. And then there was another restaurant that was a storefront that had historically been a place called Leo's Deli. And then it was bought and turned into a little café called to Tout le Monde, and they had a little wine cellar there. I was a waiter in the basement there. And then that was subsequently turned into a bought by another person and turned into a restaurant called Chester's, and I was also, I was a host and a waiter there. And let's see, what else? There was Dobama Theater, where I wasn't technically an employee, but I volunteered there, which was a regular legitimate theater in the basement and it had originally been a bowling alley. And they had converted this old bowling alley into a really nice theater on a minimum budget. They had tin cans for lighting instruments. And actually, my dad in his youth had worked at that bowling alley as a pin setter back in the days before they had automated machines that reset the pins, they had kids that would stand back there and take the bowling pins and load them into Iraq and actually set them up. Trying to think if there was any place else I worked. It seems like there was well, there was a store that was briefly open for a while that was opened. Probably nobody else remembers. This store is only open for a few months, but it was opened by the owner of a store that was actually at Cedar Fairmont called Design Corner, and they opened a Christmas store one season at Uncovered Tree with the idea of just, you know, bringing in a different crowd and everything. And I did little odd jobs for some of the businesses, short-term employment for Coventry Books and businesses like that. So I had a little bit of everything.

**Mark Souther** [00:06:17] I'd like to back up and go to a few of these places. First, I wanted to go back to Pee Wee's Bike Shop. What corner was that located on?

**Daniel Landau** [00:06:29] It was on the northeast corner.

**Mark Souther** [00:06:32] Where the Thai cafe is?

**Daniel Landau** [00:06:35] Yes. Yes.

**Mark Souther** [00:06:35] High Thai'd Cafe, I believe it's called.

**Daniel Landau** [00:06:40] I believe that's it. I actually did not spend a lot of time on Coventry anymore, so I'm not totally familiar with it. But I believe that's correct.

**Mark Souther** [00:06:51] And Cargo you mentioned. Someone else mentioned something that surprised me and that was that Passport to Peru goes pretty far back as a business, which I was surprised about. I just had guessed it was a more recent business that catered more to the college crowd in more recent years. Were they ever... Are they related? Were they ever in business at the same time, or do you know?

**Daniel Landau** [00:07:22] I don't believe there was any relationship between them. I'm I think Cargo may have been there first, but I could be wrong about that. And I think they may have been in business overlapped somewhat. I'm my guess is that Cargo was there first and then came Passport to Peru and that they overlapped. But I'm not a hundred percent sure of that.

**Mark Souther** [00:07:46] Someone else also mentioned another place... I believe it was called the Kasbah that had Moroccan imports and maybe some others. Do you remember that place?

**Daniel Landau** [00:07:57] I vaguely remember that place. I remember going in there. If if I recall correctly, it was somewhat of a secondhand store as well. Is that what you've heard from other people?

**Mark Souther** [00:08:08] I didn't get that impression.

**Daniel Landau** [00:08:11] OK.

**Mark Souther** [00:08:12] I might be wrong.

**Daniel Landau** [00:08:13] I could be wrong in my memory, too. But if I remember correctly, it was a big store on the east side of the street towards Euclid Heights Boulevard, I believe, and I seem to remember it having a kind of hodgepodge of stuff, Middle Eastern stuff, including some secondhand things. But I could be wrong about that.

**Mark Souther** [00:08:37] Someone that I interviewed early this afternoon said that she remembered back in the late '60s when University Circle around Euclid Avenue was a big hangout that predated Coventry as sort of the spot.

**Daniel Landau** [00:08:54] Yes.

**Mark Souther** [00:08:55] And she mentioned something that I'd never heard before, and that was the connection supposedly to the Glenville riots and she said that the riots were one of the things that really made people uncomfortable and sort of pushed them up the hill to Coventry, and I wondered if you have any opinipon about that or if you followed it.

**Daniel Landau** [00:09:17] I was not aware of that because the people that I was friends with people that hung out in... The University Circle scene was a place called Adele's. And there was also a bar there subsequently called the Brick Cottage. And even before that, there was a place called the Jazz Temple down there. And I was not aware of the Glenville connection, but I know that the big hangout when I was hanging around was Irv's, and a lot of the people at Irv's were people who had formerly hung out at Adele's who were people that were several years older than I am. Probably the most well-known of those people on the street was probably Daniel Thompson, the poet. And, but I was... I just caught the tail end of that scene so I was a little bit too young for that.

**Mark Souther** [00:10:07] I think Adele's burned.

**Daniel Landau** [00:10:08] Yeah, I believe that's true.

**Mark Souther** [00:10:10] In the late '60s. I want to say 1968 but I can't remember.

**Daniel Landau** [00:10:12] I'm not sure of the date.

**Mark Souther** [00:10:16] You also mentioned... Was the Dobama Theater that was where the bowling alley previously had been in the basement?

**Daniel Landau** [00:10:22] Yes.

**Mark Souther** [00:10:22] And where was that originally? Where was the bowling alley in relation to anything today that I might know?

**Daniel Landau** [00:10:27] I'm trying to picture it. I think the entrance to it... There's a doorway that's an entrance to it and I want to say it's just south of Hampshire and Coventry. But those two blocks are a little confusing. And I mix them up in my mind. But there's there's an archway with a doorway that goes into a hallway that goes both down to the basement and up to, I believe, apartment buildings that are above the storefronts there. And Dobama was in the basement. Dobama has since moved to a facility across the street from the Cleveland Heights Main Library.

**Mark Souther** [00:11:07] Mm hmm. I remember seeing that. Let's see... Do you remember the Hell's Angels?

**Daniel Landau** [00:11:17] Oh, definitely. Yes.

**Mark Souther** [00:11:17] What do you remember about them?

**Daniel Landau** [00:11:19] Well, it always seemed kind of humorous to think that there was a Cleveland chapter of the Hell's Angels and they hung out, a lot of them hung out at the See Saw Cafe, which was on the east side of Coventry. And I rubbed shoulders with them. And they they actually were, seemed like incredibly nice people. [Laughs] I mean, I...

**Mark Souther** [00:11:43] You lived to tell about it! [Laughs].

**Daniel Landau** [00:11:45] You know, they they it they were really friendly to everybody. And I never encountered any violence or any kind of threats or anything. I know that the leader of the Cleveland Hell's Angels, Beetle, the story is that he was on a motorcycle ride out to a Hell's Angels gathering and was shot by a sniper. I don't know all the details of that, but they were always really nice to me. I mean, there were ones that I recognized on the street that I didn't even know their names. And they would always say hi to me. I remember in those days I didn't have a car and I used to hitchhike a lot, and I would hitchhike out to visit my parents and they would frequently pick me up hitchhiking, and so, for me at least, and for the people I know, they weren't somebody to be afraid of. They were just part of the whole scene.

**Mark Souther** [00:12:43] Were there particular incidents that made the police zero in them, or did they zero in on them more because of their reputation?

**Daniel Landau** [00:12:54] I don't know of any incidents. I think it was more 'cause of the reputation. And there was a lot of police presence that just zeroed in on kind of everybody. I remember one very common thing was that people used to get tickets for jaywalking. And I don't know of... At no other time in my life and at no other location have I ever seen a ticket given for jaywalking. So it was kind of a harassment thing and seemed to be kind of selective enforcement, so the police presence was a little bit antagonistic but, you know, at the same time they were there to protect the store owners, not that Coventry was a particularly dangerous place or anything like that. And some of the, you know, some of the beat cops were actually really nice guys. I got to know a couple of them. And they they were really friendly guys. In fact, I remember there was a policeman named John who worked at the Heights Art Theater after, you know, who was paid as a cop to work at the Heights Arts Theater for the midnight movies. And there was a guy who was just on some kind of drugs and had passed out, and he tried to rouse him and wake him up. And the guy finally woke up and he was totally out of it. And John drove them home, you know, gave him a ride home, which I thought was pretty cool. [Laughs]

**Mark Souther** [00:14:16] What do you think killed the hippie scene more than anything else?

**Daniel Landau** [00:14:21] That's really hard to say. I mean, I think times changed. I think a lot of the counterculture was focused on the war in Vietnam. There was an overlap between the kind of hippie counterculture and the anti-war movement. I was very active in the anti-war movement, as were a lot of my friends, and when the war in Vietnam was over, finally, that kind of dispersed some of the energy. Baby boomers got older, started to have to face the prospects of supporting themselves in a more realistic way. [Laughs] And Coventry is very much... has changed but there's still a flavor of that here, of, you know, countercultural neighborhood, although now it's mostly more restaurants and places like that than little shops. Two shops that I didn't mention that were kind of symbolic or not symbolic but typical of that time was a little clothing store named Number 9 and a little store that sold just knickknacks and paraphernalia called the Coven Tree. And those date way back to the beginning of when stores like Bill Jones Leather Shop first opened. And those aren't stores that I ever worked at, but they were tiny little stores that go way back and I think maybe kind of get forgotten in the whole scheme of things because they didn't last as long as places like Passport to Peru and stuff like that.

**Mark Souther** [00:15:55] If I said take me back to the fondest memory that you have in all the years you've been associated with Coventry, what would you tell me? Or is that too tough to narrow down?

**Daniel Landau** [00:16:00] You know, I think hanging out at Irv's was, just in general... You can't really create a situation like that. It just has to evolve and happen. And the whole thing of Irv's was... You would just go in. If you didn't see anybody there you'd just sit down at a table, order a cup of coffee or something. Within a few minutes, somebody you knew would walk in. It was mostly a very late night scene. And the whole thing just consisted of sitting there and talking to people and socializing, and if somebody else came in you might move to another table so that the people at any given table were constantly changing. And it was a wonderful, wonderful, enriching social scene, wonderful conversation. People I still know today from back then, and it's not something you can, you know, a lot of coffee houses are an attempt to make that happen, but you can't make it happen. It just has to evolve and be there. And it was the right place at the right time with the right people.

**Mark Souther** [00:17:07] That's the best vignette of Irv's that I've had, so thank you.

**Daniel Landau** [00:17:12] Great, thank you.

**Mark Souther** [00:17:14] I've heard some interesting things but the way you said that was very nice. You know, I'm trying to think of what I want to ask. We have just a few minutes of tape, or memory card, here. Let me pause for a moment. [Recording paused and then resumes]

**Daniel Landau** [00:17:36] I have very fond memories of Coventry School. I went there when I was through third grade when I was a little kid, and Coventry School as this beautiful, old, Midwest-style school building in very good shape. Very interesting. It was site planned to the corner of Cleveland and Heights, or of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Coventry and Washington Boulevard, which is now blocked off. I have wonderful memories of the school. One of my parents actually had gone to Coventry. So it was one of these old school buildings that just had a feeling of generations of people going there. And so when the city of Cleveland Heights decided to start replacing their old school buildings with new buildings that conformed to this open classroom concept, it was very disturbing to a lot of people. And I actually, during that time, I was working at Cargo, Cargo had two big picture windows in the front, and working there I was able to look out the windows and watch the demolition of Coventry School. And the last thing that was left standing was the tower that was the kind of centerpiece of the entrance to the school. And that was one of my sadder memories of Coventry. And it was a tough building to tear down. I mean, that was built like a fortress, and that seemed like an end of an era to me. Coventry had a reputation as being one of the better schools in Cleveland Heights. And it was also... It had a huge playground that was just full of all kinds of wonderful playground equipment that would probably be illegal today for reasons of liability lawsuits and things like that. [Laughs] It had this court built this courtyard that was enclosed behind that was kind of a mysterious space. And so that was, you know, and a friend of mine actually took photographs of the demolition, which I still have today.

**Mark Souther** [00:19:37] Okay, I'm going to stop us here since we're getting close to the [inaudible].

**Daniel Landau** [00:19:41] Okay.

**Mark Souther** [00:19:41] Thank you very much.

**Mark Souther** [00:19:43] Thank you.