

2-23-2003

Fred Bremer interview for Wright State University Oral History Course 645

Cynthia Spangler

Fred Bremer

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Oral History interview with Fred Bremer of 154 S, Dutoit Street, St. Anne's Hill,
Dayton, Ohio on February 23, 2003

Content outline:

Tape 1(transcribed)

1. Background information on Fred Bremer (birthday, address, education)
2. His experiences as a paperboy in neighborhood (route, customers, paper prices, experiences, etc.)
3. Downtown Dayton (Shopping, theaters, Christmas, etc.) (166)
4. Original owner of Fred's home.
5. Dayton businesses (Esther Price, Cassano's etc.) (277)
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8. Second job (washing cars) (397)
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Tape 2 (not yet transcribed)

1. Interstate 35 continued
2. Alice Woodward
3. Makeup of neighborhood then and the transition to a historic district
4. Early "pioneers" in the neighborhood
5. Today's neighborhood and residents
6. Effect of downtown living on neighborhood
7. Various stories about neighborhood and past residents (the Hermans, Bill Gilough, the drug store, doctor's office etc.)

Summary of Oral History interview with Fred Bremer of 154 S. Dutoit Street, St. Anne's Hill, Dayton, Ohio on February 23, 2003.

Interviewer: Cynthia Spangler

"Everybody yearns for a neighborhood"

Fred Bremer is a well-known resident in the St. Anne's Hill Historic District. He is becoming what he affectionately refers to as a "lifer". Lifers are those individuals who have been fortunate enough to have lived their whole lives in St. Anne's Hill. There are few on them left. Many who were born here and grew up here left when urban renewal started moving up the hill. Some were displaced when Interstate 35 went through. Others left for the suburbs when bussing began. Many of those who stayed have passed away. Residents of the Hill treasure the memories they have of the "Bob Herman's." Mr. Herman was born in a house on Fred's street, grew up there, married, and lived there his entire life of ninety-six years. Fred Bremer grew up at 47 Henry Street in the house his grandmother and his parents owned. Today Fred's brother owns the family home. Fred owns his own house on Dutoit Street, one block away.

Fred is friendly and talkative and quite entertaining at neighborhood social events. He is a source that newcomers in the neighborhood look to for information. He knows everyone, which house they live in, which house they used to live in, who lived there before them and if anything exciting has happened in their house. Fred was a paperboy in the neighborhood and

remembers when all the storefronts were businesses. The neighborhood had several grocery stores, a butcher, a drug store and a doctor's office. The doctor even made house calls. Fred's mother could look out her back window and tell if the doctor was in by the fins of his huge car that didn't quite fit in his garage. Neighbors would call and ask her to look out the window to see if the doctor was back from his rounds at the hospital.

Fred is a good source of information on the many changes that have occurred in Dayton and in the neighborhood. His paper route, which covered part of East Fourth Street and the area that is now Becker Electric was razed during Dayton's urban renewal. He knew the "little old blue haired ladies in gym shoes" who went to the city commission to get the bulldozers to stop before they came any higher up the hill. He saw Interstate 35 go through and he remembers the streets and houses that were taken out to make room for the new highway. He has seen his neighborhood go from good to bad to good again. He was already here when the "urban pioneers" came in and helped turn the area into a historic neighborhood.

It would be difficult to interview Fred Bremer and not have the discussion become about the neighborhood. He has spent his life here. He has seen incredible changes. Residents who lost their homes to urban renewal were paid between eight to twelve thousand dollars for their properties. Fred was laughed at when he went to the bank to ask to borrow thirty thousand to buy the house he lives in now. It was only after proving that the giant Victorian that housed eleven rental units was an investment property, was he able to get a loan. Fred

eventually turned the house into his residence. 154 Dutoit is a grand high Victorian house that was featured on the 2002 Christmas Tour. Remarkably the house and all of its magnificent oak woodwork survived its years as a boarding house. Today Fred's house appraises at ^{225 thousand} 225 thousand, quite an improvement. But Fred doesn't just talk about his home. He talks about the spirit of the neighborhood and the people who have helped make it great. There are people who have owned, renovated and lived in as many as five houses in the neighborhood. The "Snoop Sisters" made sure that everyone was doing things the way they should. Many single women moved in and renovated houses in the early days of the turn around. Fred laughs when he talks about how older women buy houses in the neighborhood and their children are just sure they have lost their minds, so they come to check it out and wind up buying houses here too. Some times it works the other way. The young person buys first and the parents move in later. But what Fred emphasizes most is the sense of neighborhood. He feels that is what most people want and what they don't have in other communities. He feels lucky to live in his neighborhood. He has helped to make it the place it is today. Fred was one of the first neighborhood presidents. He hosts the annual Fourth of July block party, organizes the neighborhood alley cleanups, and is always there for the weekly summer bicycle road trips. He is proud of his diverse neighborhood which he says "gets along for no apparent reason." Perhaps is he was right when he says, "Everyone yearns for a neighborhood."

Cynthia Spangler
Oral History
Dr. Marjorie McLellan
February 22, 2003

Interviewer: Cynthia Spangler

Interviewee: Fred Bremer
154 S. Dutoit St
St. Anne's Hill
Dayton, Ohio

Date: February 22, 2003

Location: Home of Fred Bremer

Interview with Fred Bremer of 154 S. Dutoit St, St. Anne's Hill.

Cindy: Okay, when were you born?

Fred: May 29, 1946.

Cindy: And where did you live or grow up here in Dayton?

Fred: 47 Henry Street, that's one block over.

Cindy: And you lived here your whole childhood?

Fred: Correct. My entire life.

Cindy: What schools did you attend?

Fred: I went to Holy Trinity grade school, then I went to Chamanade Jullian High School and then I went to UD. And have short stays at Sinclair and Miami Jacobs.

Cindy: All right, I've heard you talk about being a paperboy in the neighborhood. Can you tell me some stories?

Fred: Yeah, the first thing that comes to my mind is where my paper route was is no longer. I know you can't see me pointing on the tape recorder, but East Fourth Street was a little different. East Fourth Street actually dead-ended into our house here and it was a very abrupt steep hill instead of a long gradual snake that we have there now. Where Becker Electric is now is about where Fourth Street was and back of Stivers High School was another street called New Street so the paper route encompassed New Street and Fourth Street. And then in back of the Becker's was another street called Garden Street and it incorporated part of that and Henry Street and East Fourth Street over here and so that's the ground that it covered. As far as anything particular, I'm not sure if anything really jumps out. I remember that the price of papers was thirty cents and I do recall one time when they raised the price of the paper from fifty cents to sixty-two cents, I had a customer that was so upset over that raise, and mind you, I was about twelve years old. She said, "well I can't afford that anymore," and I discontinued dropping the paper at her house and the following Friday she said, "Where's my paper?" and I said, "Well you said its too much." She said, "Well I can't live with out the paper." So we started delivering it back again. The house that we're in now, I had several

customers. Lee's house, which is the Bossler Mansion, there were thirteen apartments in that house so I had the run of that house. One of the interesting things or something that stands out in my mind about the Bossler Mansion- to access some of the apartments on the third floor you went up some outside stairways from the outside and it was straight up three floors up. It actually got you to his third floor, well, obviously you don't want to walk those up so you throw the paper and hopefully it will land somewhere near the door. And if you missed more than once or twice then the paper was in no condition to deliver because by the time it bounced all the way back down it was in shreds. Then I kept it as an extra and would eventually I would either bite the bullet if I didn't get lucky and walk up the steps. This particular house we're in was real interesting because there was a gentleman here that drove a truck and he was gone for a month at a time and like I said, back then you know the paper was, oh, between forty five and sixty cents a week depending if you got it on Sunday or not. I could hardly ever catch him to collect and my branch manager was going over stuff with all of us paper boys and he noticed that a gentleman owed me five dollars and sixty some cents and that's what you worked all week for, was that much. He said, well I'll go with you and I said no I catch him every now and then and that's what I did and that was my savings, you might say, was that customer there. There was a store, and this has nothing to do with the paper route, and I don't know why it jumped out at me, but right across the street from the front of the house was there was a little carryout store there and I can't recall the name of it, but I do recall for some reason or another that the Stivers and Huffman, the kids that went there would store their crossing flags in the front of that store. Again, I don't know why that jumped out at me, but it did. And I can recall one of the kids grabbed for his flag and hurried to go out and everything on the counter that was in the area, you know, he was looking outside, and he just wiped the counter clean of everything. I'm, sure there would be other things that would jump out. I never was an honor paperboy, but they had special bags to carry and there is a guy that lived in this neighborhood named Paul Hushing who was an honor paperboy. **(100)** You had to have so many customers and reach a plateau and I wasn't fortunate enough to do that. But his was a dark green bag, and I ran into him ironically about a month ago and we started reminiscing and he's still got that paper bag that the Dayton Daily News gave to the honor boys. They were dark green, the whole bag, the letters were white and outlined in red, saying Honor Paper Carrier or some sort. You carried your papers on the front of the bike or they had saddle bags which looked like a set of saddle bags and if you had a rear fender on your bike, which all bikes back then had rear fenders and

supported with braces where you could ride your buddy. Or they had a thing called a carrier, I don't know, that's what we called them years ago, just a little flat apparatus that was over the top of that and these bags were designed to fit on your bike and had little ties at the bottom of the bag that would tie it into your bike so it wouldn't get into your spokes or whatever. So those are the things that I think just jump out a little bit about the paper route. Meeting the people on the paper route, knowing who is home and when. A little trick I learned then I use to this day, if you want to knock on the door and somebody is at the back of the house, my branch manager said "Watch This" and I'll never forget this, he pulled out a fifty cent piece and he turned it on its edge and like five real crisp raps on the glass and that sound carries clear through the house. (129) We woke up people that were in bed upstairs at the rear of the house. To this day I'll never forget that. Matter of fact about two or three months ago, I used it to get into a store. They were closing and I grabbed the old coin and went like that and somebody turned around noticed me. I had to pick up something right at closing time. That's about all I can recall.

Cindy: I heard you this summer talking about eating on your route, eating at the fire station.

Fred: Well, yes, boy, am I glad you brought that up. I had one customer that was across East Third. Your routes were in zones and that was the fire station. I'm so glad you brought that up because that is a fond memory. You would go in the side door which you can see from Keowee Street now and which was the kitchen entrance. There was a rather robust gentleman there that had the cooking duties and he was good because you just walked in there and the place smelled real good. I would look at him and if he kind of nodded his head to the direction of the table that they had over there I knew he had something out and I was welcome to it. What really jumps out was his pineapple upside down cake. (148) That was the best stuff and I would go to get a little piece, and I think I was pretty courteous when I was a youngster and was taught to be that way, and he'd go, "Go ahead and get a piece", you know. So I helped myself to a second piece, but what that was was my last stop before I got home, and it was just enough to ruin my supper, you know. My mom, you know, always had a meal on the table, whatever. So if I wasn't at the firehouse, we would stop, there was a little shop down on Fifth Street, we called it the wine store. I can't recall the formal name of the store, but there was a guy named Nick that ran it, they called him Nick the Greek and we would stop there and get a Coca-Cola for a nickel and a Bit O' Honey, and I don't know why I can remember that Bit O' Honey, but for a dime

we ruined our supper again, you know, for a dime. So, those were the two big things. I'm glad you brought that up about the fire station.

Cindy: Tell me what Downtown Dayton was like when you were growing up. (166)

Fred: That was pretty neat, going downtown was a treat. You dressed up to go downtown, kind of like riding on an airplane, I guess, or a train, anything. That was considered formal. Blue jeans downtown, that was unheard of. Matter of fact, if somebody was downtown that wasn't dressed up that attracted the attention. Now it is quite the opposite. One of the fondest memories I have of going downtown is going with my grandmother who lived on 47 Henry Street and we all grew up there. As a matter of fact, my brother is still in that house. He's in the house that my grandmother had, then my parents and now he's got it. We would go downtown. We would ride the bus and my grandmother liked to go to Rike's, which is transformed now into Lazarus. The two things that really jump out in my mind were Rike's really went out of their way at Christmas. This was something that you would see in the movies. All their display windows were tailored for the Christmas season, especially the window at the corner of Second and Main. They would put a train set up in that window and somewhere there is a newspaper clip of me when I was probably four or five years old with my two hands and my nose against that window looking at that train setup and just dreaming that you could have something. That went up into your adolescent ages. They did that. Muth Brothers, every year would put a decoration on the side of the building of Santa Clause's sleigh and the reindeers, in a graduated, right from that particular corner, matter of fact, Second and Main, the sleigh would be on like a marquee and then you would see the reindeers gradually go higher and higher up the building you know like its taking off. So it just wasn't straight. They were, one reindeer was elevated higher then the next set and the next set and on up. We knew when the reindeer was up, buddy, this was Christmas season rounded third and heading home. Everything was tailored to that. So, Rike's really stands out in my mind downtown. There was Beerman's obviously. The Metropolitan was downtown. The theaters downtown, the RKO Theaters. There were several names, The Lowes, The Ames, State, gosh, I'm, trying to think of it. The Mayfair wasn't one of the RKO Theaters and anybody who listens to this who remembers the Mayfair will be laughing hard. One other thing though I do remember about Rike's. My grandmother and I were getting in the elevator and it was about to close and a tall gentleman in the elevator just put his hand out and said, "Let them on." Because I think there was actually an elevator operator

that ran it up and down the floors. This gentleman was David Rike and we didn't know it. My grandma was a very modest type person and Mr. Rike looked at her and he says, "I don't know your name, but I see you in my store a lot." Boy, my grandmother, it was just like seeing a celebrity to her. He says, "Where you going?" And she indicated, I think, we were going to house wares. We were going to get something. And he said, "Do you mind riding up to the eighth floor?" I believe it was, the sixth or the eighth where his office was. We went up there and he invited us in and he gave my grandmother one of his business cards. And he said, "If you're ever not satisfied", he says, "you come to me, come right up here to this office, you know where its at." That was such a thrill for my grandma to have David Rike acknowledge her and do that. It was one of the things she talked about, you know, one of her claims to fame you might say. So that stands out in my mind. There were a lot of clothing stores downtown. Right where Wilkies is now there was a men's clothing store in that area right there called Dunhills. You know, Dayton's lost all that personal touch. I was just trying to think, there was a drugstore that rotated in that area. Sounds kind of crazy, Carl Schmidt. It was just an old-fashioned drugstore downtown. Suburban Downtown Dayton on Wayne Avenue just, well its actually the tail end of the Oregon District, right on Wayne and Jones Street. Most people will remember a decorator there, Herman Miller something, but before that, and a couple of before that's, it was Blood Hardware. There was an old gentleman in there who reminded you of Vincent Price, very tall, thin, bent over and his bedside manner had a lot to be desired. I remember going in there as a kid and I asked the guy for a cheap putty knife. And he turned around, and it wasn't that he was yelling, it was just his natural demeanor, and he said, "We don't have cheap putty knives here" in a stern voice. Then he said, "Come over here, I'll show you an inexpensive one." (laughs) Getting back into downtown Dayton, the Oregon District was rough back then, nothing what it is now. Those are the big things I recall downtown is going to the different stores to Beerman's and Rike's. It was Elder Beerman's and before that though it was Elder Johnson's. EF McDonald was down there. That's where this house, the birth of this house, was Cappel. He was a partner in the EF MCDonald. As a matter of fact, he started EF McDonald business. The reason McDonald's name ended up with it. It was called Cappel-McDonald and when Cappelle passed away McDonald took it over. McDonald was the actual guy that introduced the idea of the incentive programs. Cappel make parasols and luggage, very high-end stuff, and times were rough. "What are we going to do with all these things?" Well, McDonald came up with the idea, hey, if salesman want to do this and that, he involved the incentive idea. So this was the Cappel house right

here. They built this house here. He had a brother that owned a furniture store. His house is on Jones Street. And ironically they are about the same size and I'm not sure about the lay out. I can barely remember being in that house down on Jones Street.

Cindy: That's the big house on Jones Street, I know which one you are talking about.

Fred: It is close to the corner, well, I shouldn't say close to the corner, closer to Jones and Brown than it is to any other. And you're right there weren't very many large homes on Jones Street.

Cindy: When I talked to Joanne Connors and Glenna they all talked mentioned Maude Miller's Candies

Fred: Wow.

Cindy: Remember that?

Fred: No I don't, I remember the name, but I don't remember..

Cindy: It wasn't a big deal for you?

Fred: No, we were brought up on Esther Price. (277) And my mom, we were not upper middle class; we were probably middle class minus one or something if we wanted to go on the financial scale. But there were certain things mom did that kind of stuck with me. We were brought up on Esther Price and she used to talk to Esther. We would go there and it was a big, big treat if you got Esther Price candy. Esther used to brag about no preservatives. You get her candy and you eat it within a reasonable time and these other people who ship it all over the country, they have to do something. Don't take this the wrong way, but Whitman's or Russell Stover or something like that you know, that just wasn't candy. We were brought up on Esther Price. Like Mikesell's potato chips, Gem City Ice Cream, and it goes on and on.

Cindy: Cassano Pizza?

Fred: Cassano pizza, exactly right. My dad sold Vic Cassano his first refrigeration case when him and Mom DeNessi were starting out and dad was one of these kind hearted type people and he, you know, nobody could just open up a check book and write out for a piece of refrigeration of that magnitude. Dad did it for everybody. He would carry some people. So you would go on the road with him Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and he would go around and, eight dollars a week, five dollars a week, something like that. We would pick up a pizza from Vic every now and then. That was how

those two guys handled that. Things were done on a napkin and a handshake and they just stuck to their word. It was really neat how things worked.

Cindy: What did you do for fun when you were young and what about when you started to date? (303)

Fred: Young first. We were involved in a lot of sports and I can recall first off, if you were raised in the Catholic atmosphere and you went to a Catholic grade school, you went out for sports. And I don't care if you were considered the nerd or not, if you had glasses as thick as the coke bottoms, as they'd to say, everybody played sports. Then you were getting prepared to go to the sports magnet downtown, which was Chamanade. And they got their pick of the cream of the crop. But, sports were a big part of our growing up. In grade school we were very competitive and we had a very dominant team. When we weren't in school, Henry Street was our baseball diamond, our football field. Basketball was something that if somebody had a patio out back, when was unusual back then, with a hoop, you gathered at that house. We had one of those so it was a gathering point. We would go down to Bomberger. They had brothers tournaments down there and I can recall being involved in one of those. Matter of fact, we won one of those, my brother and I and two other sets of brothers. We had a team of six. So, playing in the street was pretty neat for us and that's what we did. We weren't angels. We would get in trouble. There probably wasn't a cherry tree or apple tree or fruit tree that didn't get... you know, would be bountiful and the next morning it wouldn't be for some reason. Something had happened in the middle of the night that the cherries got picked or whatever. But I can recall playing out in the street and a guy named Danny Wheeler who was about two or three years older than our group. We had groups about two years apart so; if you were ten there was another group about twelve years old. Dan was about the fifteen-year-old guy and we would play ball out and he was considered very, very good. I can recall playing with Dan and barely holding on to the pass when he threw it. He threw it so darn hard, you know. There was a coal yard right her next to Lee's mansion called Jones' Coal where Sid's is now. And you'd go over there and play and get in trouble, because we didn't realize that you could get hurt in places like that. The railroad is over there which was a natural attraction for kids, boys especially. So that was it, pretty much it through grade school. In high school, what we did for fun...those were years where you develop your habits, I guess, for the rest of your life. I was not a drinker or a smoker, but I loved automobiles. (344) So I spent a lot of time building racecars and before that I would modify my bicycle and you know, to see who had the fastest bike. It was most of the time. So I kind of did that growing up. I worked a lot. My father

was in business all his life, so whatever business he was in I spent a lot of time there. So I didn't have quite the social life that a lot of kids did. Social life was not number one for me. Number one for me was dedication to the family, which was my father's business. You would, you know, you just did it. It wasn't "are you going to?" or "do you want to?", it was just something bred into you that you did. We spent a lot of time in the family business, which he sold refrigeration cases and stuff. Did not do any bar hopping or anything of the sort because you couldn't do that and still have the money to do what I wanted to do. I wanted to be competitive and that's where my money went. I worked a lot. I built my racecar and then had the social life. It was kind of like number three.

Cindy: Where did you race cars? Street racing?

Fred: No, that was illegal, not that we all didn't do it. I was probably, this is when manufacturers... I was the product of the muscle car age. The manufacturers were all in races against each other. Whoever you saw on TV win the race on Sunday, they sold cars on Monday, this kind of thing. It still holds true today. So, I built a drag car and it was a car, and I kind of built it under my parents nose, because they didn't really realize it. The last time they saw the car my brother had damaged the transmission in it and my dad said, "Well that's not worth fixing." It was in a garage and I took the transmission out, and I'll never forget this, I had no idea what I was doing. [I] saw what was wrong with it and just started asking questions on how do you fix it and fixed it myself. Then came across an engine that was a little bit bigger and how this was all done without my parents knowing I don't know but, I just modified this car. Then when I was sixteen it was ready. This was before I was sixteen years old. I was introduced to cars, and that reminds me of another story I could tell you, but anyway. Early in my life, so I when got my license when I was sixteen the very next Sunday I was out on a drag strip with this car here. [I] got brought down to reality real quick even though a lot of it was done out of your pocket it was whoever had the most money won. It was like, "How fast do you want to go?" and that was how much you spent on your car. So we didn't win by far, got knocked out the first time. But you live and you learn and finally we got to a competitive stage. One thing led to another and then I ended up later on in my early adult life, ended up with a specially prepared car from Ford Motor Company. They were called Thunderbolt Fairlanes and only a real enthusiast will know what those were. It was competitive on the national record. I can recall the last time we raced that car because it just seems like as life went on, if you didn't keep up with things... we raced all day and won the eliminations and whatever. A gentlemen came in with a trailer, everybody has trailers now, but

back then a trailer was something a trailer was something you drove your car your car up on and it was just for your car. Now they bring semis in. Well this guy had a semi-trailer and his motor went bad at the drag strip and they just pulled another motor out of the trailer and put it in. That's exactly what I did (in response to Cindy's facial expression). I looked at Carl and Carl looked at me and I said, "Let's quit while we are ahead." And we packed up and we never went back. Decided that you had to have factory sponsoring and stuff like that or you were going to go broke. So that was that.

Cindy: You said there was another car story? (397)

Fred: Well, when I got introduced to cars and it kind of goes back to the paper route. I can remember my branch manager coming up to me because of the urban renewal here the people started to move and one customer at a time, you know, was moving out a little ahead of time. It was just obvious that there was not going to be enough customers there to support a paper route for one person. I came in on a Friday and my branch manager came up to me and he was a guy who had to keep his dignity, I guess, in front of the boys and not act very sentimental, I'd say. He was a very good person or he wouldn't have been a branch manager. It took a special person to do that. So he says, "I need to talk to you" and we went out back of the garage and he stuck his arm on my shoulder and he said, "You just don't have enough customers to maintain a route and Dayton Daily News feels that it should be divided up among the other boys." My route was divided and I think I got a check for nine dollars or something, kind of a severance on that. That was on a Friday. Saturday morning I'd get up like I did most Saturday mornings and was washing my mom's car in front of our house on Henry Street and I heard somebody whistling, but it was just a long "Wheee-whit" type whistle, but it was loud. I really didn't pay much attention to it, but then the whistle came again and I turned around and I noticed the guy. If you can picture the bar on the corner of Fifth and Henry, it was Jo-Jo's for years... there was a robust gentleman standing on those steps and I could see him gesturing, a whistle hear and whistling. I just looked at him and he went like that, pointing at me and waving, motioning me to come. I pointed to myself, "Like me?" He goes "Yeah you" and pointed again, "Come here". I put the hose down and went up to Fifth Street there and I stood on the side on the corner and he said, "You want to wash my car?" I said, "Yeah, I guess." He said, "Well come on over and get the keys when your done there." I was nowhere near driving age, somewhere, fourteen maximum. He had a new Chrysler New Yorker, pale yellow and that's the equivalent of a Cadillac or a Lincoln Continental and he took me out back and

pointed to the wire wheels. He said "Can you get those clean?" They were real spoke wheels. Without batting an eye, I'll never forget this, I said, "I can get that clean." He said, "How are you going to do it?" I said, "I'll get one of my mom's SOS pads." I was young and wasn't afraid to work. He said, "You gong to clean every one of those spokes with an SOS pad?" I said, "Yeah." So I brought it over. He watched me cross the street. He says, "You got a driver's license?" I said, "No." He gave me the keys anyway and he said, "Well, I'll stand here and watch you." So I brought it over and parked it in front of the house and went in and got a pad and strung it. I just went like, a back and forth motion with it like a person would take a shoeshine rag on buffing your shoe. I got it all perfectly clean; it was a really nice job. This was just when the cars washes were going to the steam clean white walls and stuff. Back a car wash was about a dollar which is another story. They were just getting into using the steamers back then and they weren't getting them clean. There is nothing that can replace taking a hand and washing over something. You can use steam, but it will not, there will still be a film. I took the car back to him, to make a long story short. This gentleman, you have to picture Jackie Gleason, same stature, same size, the mustache, his mannerisms, the flamboyant type person. When he talked his hands moved. He was so impressed with that wash job he goes into the bar and he makes everybody in the bar, and when I say makes them; they had no choice, come out and look at it. He says, "Now that, that is how you get it clean." He said, "Now there's a wash job." He was really impressed with it and he said, "What do I owe you?" And I said, "oh, I don't know." You know, I had never done it. I'll never forget this, he pulled a lot of money out of his pocket and he flipped me a five-dollar bill. I assumed it was a dollar. I'm walking away and I looked at that and my eyes got as big as silver dollars and I turned around like "You really mean this?" He said, "You earned it." It was a scene like out of a movie. I'm looking at this in disbelief- five bucks. As I go out the door somebody says, "Hey kid!" I turned around and here comes a set of keys. I put my hand up and I grabbed them and he says, "Plymouth out front." I went from not having a paper route to washing cars on Saturday mornings. Making more money in that one day than my friends did working for a week somewhere. Some of them were in donut shops at eight, ten, twelve, thirteen dollars a week. One guy would make seventeen dollars a week and we though he was, you know, he had some money. I was making thirty-five to fifty dollars a day on Saturdays washing cars. To the point where I got a couple of buddies to help me and then, "Hey do you know how to wax a car?" "Well, no, but I'll learn." We would wax them and that's when we

got the fifty-dollar days in. We put a coat of wax on them for ten bucks. (Laughs)

Cindy: Wow, that was your car wash story? (466)

Fred: Yeah, but that wasn't it. The thing that reminded me of it was. And we can really get off on tangents. Next to the mansion, which Lee owns now, a guy named Earl Saul owned that house. On that same property he had a car wash. Way back in the fifties I can recall my dad, this is before he had his own business, he was a traveling salesman for Toledo Scale. He was gone all week and Friday night he came in. Saturday morning as a ritual you went down and got the oil changed on the Buick and you took it up the back alley over here and there's a line leading to the car wash. You just left it there keys in it and two or three hours later in the afternoon you would come back up and it would be parked out front somewhere with the keys in it. You go up to Earl and pay your dollar or dollar and a half and the car was washed there. But one of the unique things I can recall is talking to Earl after years had gone by. I can remember talking to him right before Lee bought the house and now Lee's been there twenty years, I guess. Earl and I got to reminiscing about the car wash and I asked him about the picture of an Indian on the wall. He said, "That wasn't a picture." I said, "How did you get those hole in there?" To make a long story short, we found out that Earl was a sharp shooter. Matter of fact, MGM and Paramount, and a couple would ask him to come out to Hollywood. If you remember a movie that Sammy Davis Jr. and Dean Martin were in, where they did some very fancy spinning of the guns, Earl Saul taught them all of that. What this picture was was not a picture. It was a silhouette of an Indian and you can picture the side view of an Indian with a very pronounced nose, two feathers. Earl did that freehand with a twenty-two rifle. I said, "Holy Cow!" He said, "I did another one of Uncle Sam, round here somewhere." It was never to be found. But as years went on I purchased this house and my brother purchased the house next door to me. We're cleaning out the house next door and somebody took a piece of metal and threw it and we heard it buckle. It was a thin piece of metal. I said, "What was that?" They said, "Nothing" and they held it up and said, "Its nothing but a bunch of holes it in." And there's Uncle Sam. I said, "Don't throw that away." People thought I was crazy, because when you looked at it close all you saw were a bunch of holes. And I said, "Watch" and I grabbed it and I walked toward the end of the yard and I held it and everybody says, "Uncle Sam!" I said, "That's the one that Earl did." I have that to this day. Anyways, just (laughs) to get off on a tangent.

Cindy: Now, was this car wash a hand car wash, or, how did they work back then?

Fred: Oh, hand, hand car wash. Matter of fact, funny you should ask that. They had, which I still have a set, of double tubs and they were on wheels and they had several sets of those. The first couple of them were suds. And like I said this is when they were just introducing steaming the white walls. Before that they just got down and cleaned then with a scrub brush and maybe comet or something of the sort. You recall that white walls were about five inches wide. It was the whole tire. They had tubs and when the car went in the building it was more of a ...they were soaped down and then in the building the soap was actually washed into it and rinsed. And right in front of the building, if you can picture Lee's house there, the cars were parked right out to the edge. The bumpers actually stuck out over the wall. You know, it was kind of neat. That's where they dried them all off and you either waited on your car or if you were a neighbor like we were, we just put the car in line and came back in two or three hours later and saw where the old Buick was and we'd go in and pay Earl. I can recall my dad talking to Earl. I can really recall myself talking to Earl. Thirty years, you know, its like you went away and then you came back, when you go into your adolescent age or whatever. Earl and I would talk about when he was selling his home and stuff and Lee ended up buying it.

Cindy: What about this neighborhood? When was the store torn down across the street?

Fred: Well, that was in the early sixties when the urban renewal really hit and that was controversial.

Cindy: That is one of my later questions, all about that. (518)

Fred: Oh is it, well it was on again, off again. I was at an age where I wasn't really following politics, but I do recall an article. You know the name St. Anne's is still up in the air where it came from. There was an article in the Dayton Daily News showing Mayor McGee on a bulldozer heading toward St. Anne's and it had a little sketch of

homes and it said St. Anne's. That was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back. A bunch of the, and Bill Gilough has the best way of describing "little old ladies with blue hair in gym shoes", went down to the city commission and said, "What are they [we] going to do with eight to twelve thousand dollars?" Because that was what they were giving these people for their homes. You know, how can they relocate on that? I think Mrs. Hushing was probably one of those ladies and she was one of the last to pass away on Henry Street here. It kind of stimulated St. Anne's to be considered, to be the second historic district. There, so I kind of forgot what your original question was.

Cindy: About the store across the street.

Fred: Oh, the store across the street. Well, it eventually, it was right in that area there between '60 and '64, I think, something like that. When they finally got the official go-ahead to do the urban renewal it was called, that store went with all the homes on the other side of Dutoit Street. And I can recall, either right in the back of that store or next to that store, there was a neat little cottage. That's the best way to describe it. An Air Force couple rented it and we thought it was neat, because first off, the guy was always gone and his wife was very attractive and all the boys wanted to go with me when I collected on Fridays. Just to see this gal. And he had a Great Dane there to protect her and the Great Dane was always friendly to me because he saw me everyday. But if somebody came with me that struck him the wrong way he would go. There was a kid that went with me named Loren and Loren was not athletic at all. And you'll here me throughout this interview say. "And just like in a movie" because there's a lot of things you think about it now and it would have been so perfect for a movie. The dog broke loose and Loren took off running. So just picture Alfalfa running (laughs) and (547) jumping a fence with no hands that under normal conditions he couldn't even climb over, let alone jump over. And that happened in real life. We just saw heels and elbows and Loren and the Great Dane went over the fence in unison and he came down on the ground with the dog on top of him. We were out there, and the dog didn't hurt him. He just sat there and barked. Again you were younger and kids, and a Great Dane was something. This was a big gray dog. Anyway, that's the deal with the store there.

The guy that ran that store, I can't remember a name or anything, but, boy, I can remember what he looked like. Just picture, oh, the Popeye cartoon. Who was the bad guy in the Popeye cartoon?

Cindy: Bluto or Brutus?

Fred: Brutus! He was a gentle old guy, but he always wore this type hat, and just his face and the configuration and that and rather robust and he just sat behind there. And he just had vision like your mom, eyes in the back of his head. He could always tell what was going on. And was a nice old guy, is what he was. Very congested store, just one aisle, you could barely walk in and had a variety of stuff every now and then. You could even buy some toys in there every now and then although it was basically a carry out with one little meat case in the back. And again, I told you the kids would store their crossing stuff there, but that's about when it went down.

End of tape 1, side A. Turn tape over, do not advance. Reset counter to 0.

Cindy: I was going to ask you about urban renewal later, but that will come up again. So there were houses, if you look out the front, there were houses on that side of Dutoit?

Fred: Yes.

Cindy: What about the field and the track? Was that there or were there more houses?

Fred: No. That would be the back yards of those homes. If you can picture that? Fronting Fifth Street was an old foundry and there were, and it sounds crazy, but there were about two or three houses. There was Stivers, the walkway that's right there to this day and there were two or three two story homes there.

Cindy: Okay, I've seen photographs.

Fred: Okay. And then there was a foundry that kind of L-shaped in there and then there was New Street. New Street really should have been a continuation of that alley that runs right between Henry and Dutoit.

Cindy: Okay, by the art glass place?

Fred: Yeah. If you could just picture that alley going straight it kind of did that, but it dead-ended into Stivers. Then there was a slight jog right where the new gym is built on the back of Stivers there. In between the new gym and Stivers was New Street. That's where New Street was. So, it was just back yards with walls, because like I said, Fourth Street came up a real steep straight hill. What we have here now is a general snake to make the streets butt up to each other. You had to do a jog on Fourth Street like you have to do on Dutoit and Labelle Street. Okay? And with the urban renewal they smoothed all that out and made the ascending hill much more gentle.

Cindy: So there would have been a row of houses right here?

Fred: Yeah, and what I recall about those houses, it was like; they were very modest two stories. Something like you would see on Labelle Street. Like the two story bricks on Labelle.

Cindy Like mine?

Fred: Yes, like yours. I can't recall anything real significant over there, except for the cottage and the store.

Cindy: Now, that area of Becker Electric, that was neighborhoods too?

Fred: Yes. That was East Fourth Street and Garden Street. So you had the houses, just like the houses on Dutoit Street. You have an alley between Dutoit and Henry. You had Fourth Street and Garden Street and then there was an alley in between them. So right where Becker's is now was just a line of homes. Matter of fact, the company that's on the corner here shares the same address as one of my houses on Fourth Street had when I was a paperboy. So it was just a typical residential area.

Cindy: How about Stivers? What was Stivers like? What kind of school was it then? Was it still the manual school, the vocational school?
(53)

Fred: No. Stivers was a high school. We went to Chamanade, but it was, I feel, a very good school. Kids went there and got an education. You went to Stivers and there was still, they were the Stivers' Tigers. Just like Kiser was the Panthers, whatever. They had their own identity. I can remember when Stivers beat Chamanade and nobody beat Chamanade. When I was telling you the story about playing with Dan Wheeler, he ended up being a star for Stivers High School and ended up getting a scholarship to Chattanooga, Tennessee on his football abilities. And that was the year that Stivers beat Chamanade. So it was a neat school, but we went to

the Catholic school. All our buddies went to Stivers though. And even a couple of them that could not afford the Catholic schools, which wasn't that expensive then, but still in proportions it probably was. So it was a neighborhood school.

Cindy: Tell me about Bomberger. The building that is there, when was it built? It doesn't look very old. Fifties? (74)

Fred: Yeah, I'm trying to think, because I can barely remember Bomberger in its original state. I remember when I guess I was old enough to go over there they were just completing it. So it was new. Late fifties maximum, I guess. It was a pretty neat recreation center. Some of the tough kids hung out there too, you know, it was a public grounds, but we enjoyed Bomberger a lot. I mentioned the brothers tournaments they had. They had ping-pong and shuffleboard and they had a little wood shop down in the basement if you wanted to. So it was a pretty neat recreation center. Swimming pool that everybody looked forward to, you know, in the summer.

Cindy: The same pool that is there now?

Fred: Same pool that is there now. Now the original pool, again I was a little too young to recall that, but the original pool was, if you've seen pictures of it, oh my gosh! Now, what did we do? (laughs). But it is the same pool that is now there.

Cindy: Was that like a Y pool, how did that operate?

Fred: You just walked in and paid your dime, I guess it was and you could swim all day. You didn't have to be a member or anything; it was open to the public.

Cindy: My next question, because it all ties in with what we've been talking about. I've seen photographs and I have one in my classroom that I forgot to bring of the area, like Wayne and Fifth where Dublin Pub is. And this is a picture after urban renewal and that area is just flat. They've taken everything out. When did that happen? And how far up did that go. Were there houses on Bomberger Park?

Fred: Well, yeah.

Cindy: I guess my whole question is why did it happen? How bad was that area? I know it had a reputation. It was a red light district at the turn of the century.

Fred: Yeah, that was at the turn of the century. I think when I was younger it was just in a declining state and I think it was probably; the thing to do was urban renewal. Everybody, when I say everybody, I mean cities across America were trying to do something. I remember Eagle Street coming right in to Bomberger's now. If you can picture Josie in front of the Steamboat house, just picture that street on that angle coming in. It came in to Fifth Street on an angle. There were just small homes and businesses and storefronts between here and Wayne Avenue. I can barely remember what Richard Street looked like when it came into Wayne and that is where the overpass is now, where Bank One is there, that was about where Richard Street came down.

Cindy: So that would have connected to the Richard Street that is down there (points east toward Newcom Plains area)?

Fred: Right, that was 35. And now that you mention that, they had that going on too, 35.

Cindy: I know, that is a question I have for you too (laughs).

Fred: So I think it was just, "excuse" would be too strong, but it was just the thing to do back then. It was to tear these buildings down and to make it a public area of some sort. So that's what they did. Then the Towers were built. (133) I can recall when that was built, they said nothing but rich people are going to live there because they were 250 dollars a month and that was extraordinarily high. And they went unrented for the longest time. They had a terrible time getting that place and then I think they finally compromised a little bit on the fee that they charged. For some reason or another it kind of clicked with the people who lived in the area that got elderly. They would go there. The people who worked at the Post Office, all of a sudden a light bulb went off, duh; this is going to be great. Then the population slowly went into the building. But there is another area there that I'm having a time recalling that had another brick street and if you look real close on the south side of Keowee Street, whenever they have a promotion either for the JC Towers or the Dayton Towers there they'll have somebody come and weed whack, you'll see that there.

Cindy: I've had people ask me what that was.

Fred: It was a street. And I think there was a term they used called the Old Hay Market and I'm trying to picture that being in that area around Wayne Avenue and in there. But there were streets. Keowee Street now was back then called Montgomery Street.

There was another street called Commercial and McDonna Street. They came through to Fifth Street. That is where the Post Office is now. Matter of fact, if you go down here now, you will see the remnants of Commercial and McDonna Street if you cross Keowee Street and look to your right. There should be one block of each of those street left. McDonna and Commercial. And Keowee was called Montgomery Street and it was the main drag through there. But it would not connect. It dead-ended because Keowee wasn't even there and then you didn't have the over pass for the railroad. So Keowee didn't go through. That was recent, probably within the last twenty years. Keowee now came through. You always had to go down and come back up to go to Keowee Street. Okay, if that makes sense to you there? So when they brought Keowee clear through, when they connected it, it would stop at Third Street and Keowee and all of that was filled there and the other streets would dead end into there.

Cindy: So when, I'm sure they had to pass a law to do this. So how much did they pay people for their houses? (174)

Fred: Eight to twelve thousand dollars. And I can recall that because shortly after that, say within a couple of years or so when St. Anne's looked like something was going to happen, I remember trying to borrow money on this house. And almost the exact figure because I wanted to borrow almost thirty thousand dollars and the guy looked at me and he said, "I can't justify giving you a loan for this." (laughs) When your neighborhood is eight to twelve thousand dollars and when he said that, you know, that figure, I can recall that cartoon with Mayor McGee and the ladies having a problem. Because this was about an eight to twelve thousand dollar area and I was wanting to borrow twice that on here. I went to every institution in Dayton and got turned down by everybody and it wasn't until I finagled a little bit that I got the financing on the house. Once I did the finagling, you might say, then it became a different story. I shouldn't say that, I'd keep you in suspense here. This house had had two apartments here on the main floor, had five sleeping rooms upstairs, two formal apartments in the basements, so you've got two, four, five, is nine and the carriage house had two apartments. So there were eleven units here. I went from one guy snickering and actually slamming the door in my face because he didn't want to be bothered with such a ridiculous request of financing this place to walking in to the last place left and saying, "I want to buy an investment property." And they said, "Really, well show me the figures." Well, I've still got the blue book they kept when this was a rooming house. I opened the book up and I laid it down and it showed eleven units bringing in a thousand dollars a month. This is back in the mid seventies. He looked at this and

said, "Is this current?" And I said, "Well there are the dates." He said, "I don't see any problem at all." My payments were going to be 223 dollars a month. The house generated eleven [hundred]. So what I did. Is, that was the finagling; I told them I was buying an investment property. I did not tell them I was going to live in that investment property. I kept the rental units downstairs and the carriage house for years. Matter of fact, they are still in that state to this day. And it actually helped finance the house over the years because I kept the cream of the crop of the people that were here. That was hard to do, I tell you. Because there were very questionable people here. But there were two gentlemen here that were out of the old school that was pretty neat and the carriage house, I got real lucky and rented it to an artist. That was part of the success in maintaining this place. Now it is the complete opposite, you know, for what they appraised it for recently.

Cindy: Can I ask you that figure?

Fred: Well, 205 [thousand].

Cindy: Good.

Fred: Yeah and its looking for another appraisal here real shortly, hopefully 225.

Cindy: That's great.

Fred: Except when it comes time to pay the taxes on that.

Cindy: Well, these people who had to leave their homes, did that give them enough money someplace else, that eight to twelve?

Fred: It did, but it didn't. I know they could buy someplace else, but they ended up with some sort of...

Cindy: Did you say the mid seventies? **(228)**

Fred: I bought this in the mid seventies and this was after it was officially declared historic. That was in the early seventies. What most of the people did, first off, there were just the last of the lifers about then; the little old ladies. Everything else was rental, you know the absentee landlords could care less, you know, "Give me my money and teat the old wreck down." Which we're glad they stopped where they stopped. And I don't want to... the homes on the other side of Dutoit Street and down, through the eyes of a paperboy, okay, because that is kind of what I have to remember them by, were some very basic homes. There were no structures that just stuck out. They were basic two stories either frame or brick homes,

but the fact is; they probably had history in back of them just like Labelle Street. You know you don't see that many outstanding structures but they all had their own personality and uniqueness. But I don't remember that as a paperboy, but I do remember as a paperboy, this house and obviously Lee's house. How can you not be impressed with that?

Cindy: So did they, and I probably know the answer to this probably before I even ask, when they tore those down, did they save anything? Did they go in and pull out windows or woodwork?

Fred: No. Not that I can recall. The only time anything was saved was, and it really wasn't saved, was there was a gentleman that owned a lot of property in the neighborhood and when I say a lot of property, it was about twenty of them. And he went in and he would salvage, but he would take it to a flea market that weekend and it was just like putting a knife in you when that happened. So, as far as saving or salvaging, none that I'm aware of. Unless the wrecking companies did it. I don't think that was the thing to do, that was not the in thing to do back then. It was just mow them down and get it over with.

Cindy: Tell me about 35 going through. **(258)**

Fred: Well, that was kind of a big deal. Two big things I remember about 35. One of them was it seemed like it took forever. The other thing was just, because it took forever, it seems like it just severed anything over on Xenia Avenue which everybody had a thoroughfare to. It kind of severed that. There was a live business area on Xenia Avenue between Wayne Avenue and, well Xenia went on up to Linden Avenue. They had this little live area over there by St. Mary's, Twin Towers area now and it seems like that's when all that died off there during that construction. It was just like being starved and not surviving. Like I said, it seems like it took forever. When it was finally done, one thing I can recall, right before it was done. And I have to give these people credit because there was, seemed like one delay after another. You'd be coming in 35 and everybody had to get off at the other end of Richard Street there by the St. Nick Inn. And if I remember correctly, it was an abrupt; I mean you were flying down the highway and all of a sudden left turn, or right turn it was. There was the St. Nick Inn and I think they had a couple of visitors, that, 4 wheel visitors, that they really didn't plan on. I can remember, (laughs) I shouldn't tell you that story.

Cindy: Oh, come on...

Fred: Tell it huh? I can remember taking advantage of an individual because again after you have a race care its still kind of in your blood and I never turned down a race. We were coming down 35 and I knew what was coming up. He didn't. For the longest time in during the summer you could see his tracks through the mud and where ever where he couldn't make the turn. Anyway, he could have got hurt, but he didn't so that was funny. Matter of fact, I helped get him out after I did what I did. But one of the other things, it cut you off from downtown Dayton. So when you got off up there by Richard Street, everybody was just jockeying to find the quickest back street to come through. Fifth Street became heavily traveled. Buckeye Street became heavily traveled. Finally though, right before Christmas, and this is the other thing that really stands out in my mind about 35, is right before Christmas when it was due to be opened, they opened one lane. Somebody on a board, on a 4 by 8 sheet of plywood, and they nailed it to a couple of workhorses, it said "Merry Christmas, Foley Construction." I thought that was neat, because you won't believe what that one lane did. It alleviated all the congestion and whatever and it just made 35 real nice, the convenience that it was going to provide. Not just the politics of the thing. They wrote on there "Merry Christmas, Foley Construction" and they just had this one lane and the orange barrels or what ever they were using back then were all there. You just kind of weaved through and you got to use it.

Cindy: What year did that go through? **(304)**

Fred: Gosh, I can't recall. Sixty, it has to be in there, sixty-four, that area somewhere. Right around sixty-four, [1964] I'm trying to think. Yeah, right around sixty four is what I'm picturing there.

Cindy: So, these streets, High Street went all the way across?

Fred: Yeah.

Cindy: And Labelle? Did they dig out for that? I can't picture in my mind. I guess 35 seems lower to me.

Fred: Yeah. They had to dig out because they had to build bridges across and I think it was easier to dig out than to build an overpass. So yeah...

Cindy: They had to dig way out?

Fred: Yeah, it was a mammoth undertaking. If you were really a young kid that was the playground of playgrounds. You know, to go over and to play in the highway [with] all those bulldozers and stuff of the sort. But yeah, those streets went right through: High Street,

Labelle Street, Henry Street. There used to be a firehouse on the corner of Henry and Xenia. I think they have in turn changed the names of the streets once they get on the other side of, in matter of fact, they did change some of Samuel Street. That is not the original name of that street. I'm trying to think of what the original name of that street was. And I know somebody that I could ask, but Samuel Street is not the original name of that up there. Why they renamed them, I don't know. It was Allen Street. For some reason that comes to my mind. Right up here on Fifth Street where they have the wood, The Appalachian wood, are you familiar with that on Fifth Street?

Cindy: With the shingles on it?

Fred: Right next to the Dairy Mart, the building there. That used to be a supermarket called Gershow's. The Gershow family is now part of the people who own the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise and what ever else the other one was that goes along with Kentucky Fried Chicken. But that was like a neighborhood supermarket, but that's where we went and got all our groceries and stuff. Gershow's it was called, it was a big deal then.

End of first tape. (333) Reset counter to 0 for tape 2.