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C O N T E N T S

This book contains the following order of inter-views:

Sister DeMetria

Book 16

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V. 16

This is Sister DeMetria at 4500 So. Lowe, the Convent at St. Gabriel's Parish

Q. Sister DeMetria -- you were born and reared here in Canaryville?

A. Right here. We never used the word Canaryville, never. There was a group of people who came from the County Kerry, Ireland and they settled in one section down here around 44th Street, or 44th Place, called Leyton Street and they were great people for these home entertainments, meetings, where they played the Accordion and danced to it in the homes. Of course, sometimes the children became very mocking about the whole thing, you know, and it was said to them many times -- "you must think you're canaries -- you must think you're canaries" and out of it grew the word Canaryville. Otherwise it was always known as the Stockyard District.

Q. Huh uh fine! We will just pick up and take up from there. I noticed that the streets here have interesting names and have a bit of an Irish flavor about them; like Emerald. What are some others? Do you know if those streets were really named deliberately to reflect the Irish?

A. I wouldn't think so, No. For instance, there was one Baker Avenue and then there was Leyton. Now whether that was named after someone, I don't recall any family by the name of Leyton but that could have been.

Q. There's a Parnell I noticed and a Lowe. That's an Irish name?

A. Yes, that's after the great Parnell, the Irish speaker.

Q. Do you have any ideas how Union Street got its name?

A. From the Union Stockyards.

Q. That's right -- that's what it's called.

A. First of all, P.D. Armour and Ogden Armour and Nelson Morris were the ones who had the greatest number of men -- were from here -- and some of the young people worked in the offices, and he, especially, P.D. Armour, he knew everyone of his employees by their names and this was one thing very characteristic of the employer of that day, any member of his staff or the working men who were sick or when it was a serious sickness, Mr. and Mrs. Armour often brought -- after the first visit there -- would bring bed linens, blankets, pillows and see that the doctor came and saw the families that were very sick. The members of them, especially the working member, saw to it that health returned as best and quick as it could. Now that was one very human element that was characteristic of the Armours, then Nelson Morris never refused to take in the young people as they became educated and that was another thing the people in this Parish, I should say section, of the city wanted was education. And the greatest man, the outstanding man for that was the founder of this St. Gabriel's Parish, which takes in from 49th Street to 39, and from one block west of Halsted to the Railroad tracks over here and your Wentworth Ave. He Father Morris J. Dorney was a very close personal friend of the Armours.

There was never a drive for money. Education here was a necessity, Father Dorney who was a lawyer maintained, so he built not only a grade school but a high school building which stands today. It was opened in 1905. They had a high school before then, the graduates were -- is there something you wanted to ask me.

Q. No, I am anxious to know anything that you'd like to say.

A. Among the very first graduates which would be in 1888, I think, the first high school graduated was for both boys and girls and in that group was the son of Tom Griffin, who later when he worked, was a bookkeeper and he was a very well educated Irishman when he came here and his son James became a priest, studied in Rome for 6 years as did Father Parker, Father Rogers these are the earliest ones -- Father Dodey, Father John McInerney, Father John Garrity; whose father worked in the Yards. Not all these fathers worked over in the Yards, just Mr.Griffin, who became Superintendent. Also, Mr. Ahern; his son became the Rector of North American College in Rome. Now all of these were graduated from this school and the Pastor, Father Forney, and Father Keo; who was a great Latin teacher and taught in the High School here, and Father Dodey was the first Rector of the famous St. Mary of -the Lake Seminary and in the town when it was known as Aria out in Illinois, it's now Mundelein.

Q. Oh yes.

A. Yes, so all through the years now we had this very distinguished group.

Q. A very distinguished group came from this neighborhood.

A. Yes, came from here, and then there was a Judge McDonald who lived here. But in connection with Father Dorney and the Armours- the school education was free and the people gave their Sunday contribution, that's what kept the two schools going and if Father got very hard up, the Sister of Mercy taught here, as they are still teaching here, and the Father would go to J.P. Armour and say to him "I need a little money to get some coal." How much would you like? Well, you know about how much it will take, so he would take \$2,000 or \$3,000 until he needed money again, Father Dorney went over there -- there were many strikes -- threatened and accomplished over at the Stockyards and Mr. Armour would call on Father Dorney -- there was a big viaduct leading up from Halsted Street high up over the cattle pen and he would stand up there. and address all of these men who were down in the pen, refusing to do the cow punching and he would address them and talk to them and reason with them and scold them even, but he was a very strong instrument in many strikes not coming to a completion in this neighborhood, At his death in 1914, Mr. Ogden sent over a man who was a sculpture I presume, that's what he was. He wished to make a bust, at least of Father Dorney, and he was asking Father

Dorney's cousin Father Ryan for the permission to do that. And what was the purpose -- Mr. Armour intended to put it high up on this viaduct at, 45th Street so that it would be always an instant reminder of the greatness and the goodness of what Father Dorney wanted of the men who worked there, A great number of them from this Parish and other Parishes, east of here and Father Ryan, I think, said the memory of them will live with their children and you won't need to do that, so that was not done- as Mr. Armour wished to have it done.

Q. The sort of work experiences that people had. I'm sure it was hard work?

A. Oh yes, they were at work at 5 o'clock in the morning and of course there was no transportation such as we have today and the men from the inner part of the Parish had to walk to it and therefore they had to leave very early in order to get there and be ready at 5:00 A.M., and they worked on into any time from 10, 12 to 14 hours if there was a need for it, you know to get the cattle housed or whatever they had to take care of.

Q. That would have been for the people who worked in the Stockyards,

A. At the Stockyards.

Q. Beyond that there were the Packinghouses. I'm sure many of these neighborhood people worked in the Meat Packing?

A. Oh, yes they did. Up until 1918 when a great many of the colored people were brought up due to the war and they became

you know, they had to do it because there was so many that have gone to war; that was the Packing and then the office work. As the children became educated they got their work over there.' There's one man, the son of Mr. Tom Griffin, who was Tom, Jr., he's been retired for the past ten or eleven years. He followed right in the footsteps of his father that happened to a great many of them. Then, Will Russell was with Swifts, and there were others that were with Wilson and Hammond, but the outstanding -- the earliest ones were the biggest. A great number of people worked with Armour's.

Q. All right! Was the packinghouse work considered unhealthy?

A. Never; no it never was -- now that's another thing! This was the smallest area, the place that I mentioned to you, the streets, you know. The largest area with the greatest population and never was it known to be an epidemic of any kind, so much though, that when people would talk about the Stockyard air, well they'd say, "that's the thing that keeps us healthy."

However, that really wasn't the source of the offensive air, it was Darling's Glue Factory, and it was only within the last three or four years that Darlings' had to do something about it. Certainly it is within your memory, I am sure.

Q. Yes I know of it.

A. Because they were very reluctantly -- every just occasionally

we would gets some more, and its with great regret, I think, that everyone seems to feel about the closing up of the Stockyards. Then, of course, we had the great Amphitheater for the Stock Shows and they are, even today, some of the wives and daughters, the children of these early people are working over there when these concessions open up, they call upon some of the people from here to work.

Q. Then you'd say that the people of this neighborhood, rather than resenting the industry over there, felt very close to it.

A. Very close and they glory in saying "Well I'm from the Stockyards, you surely know that place", and you'll hear that always, they probably say "I'm from St. Gabriel's which is located in the great Stockyards."

So you mean to say as neighborhood people would be talking to people from other parts of the city.

A. Talk to people from other parts of the city, yes. And there was very little moving out from this place even yet if you noticed the homes as you drove in, they've all been renovated new homes going up as you go through there. I think there's seven been constructed homes in the vacant lot and the peoples' children stay here in the new homes.

Q. Why do you think that is? When so many other neighborhoods are moving out to the suburbs and the new generations don't want to stay in the old neighborhoods, but here it's different.

A. It is different, and you don't find many whose fathers and

and grandfathers will be found in nursing homes. There was a woman buried here this morning, 94 years old, never was a night away from her home except while she was in the hospital and her father was the Blacksmith of the neighborhood. then when the cattlemen came in, in such great numbers, a Mr. McKllum, down at the north-end closer to the Yards, he became the Blacksmith. But this was the other man's daughter, a very good woman, and the home is still where she was brought up in as a child.

Q. That's interesting! But tell me why they stay here?

A. We have wonderful transportation. You go over to Halsted St. and you could get one of three busses. There's three busses, they use to be the street cars, of course. They have 47th St. going east and west. They have Halsted St. going north and south and you see the confines are close to these places, and then they have Root Street which goes between Exchange Ave. down there to the Lake on 43rd and the bus is the same.

Q. Where do you think that most of the people now make their living? If twenty years ago they were making their living in the meat industry, that's now evaporated. What trend has taken its place?

A. Well the Ace Transportation at 47th St. I remember, when they demanded young people -- trucking people -- then you have the Goodman Manufacturing on Halsted at 48th. What have we got north --

there used to be the Telephone Exchange until the second Stockyard fire in the 30's burned it out so they never re-located it. What else have we got -- we've got the railroads at the right; you might say in the center from east to west. You have the Wabash, the Indiana; which goes all the way downtown and connects with all the outline streets, and, of course, the people here make use of it also.

Q. And that of course, I am sure, that many of them have gone into the Building Trades.

A. They've gone into the Building Trades and many of them employed in the Internal Revenue. There was a station over here -- an office over there in the Stockyards on Exchange Ave. and quite a few of the graduates from our school went over there. And then, we have the Drover's Bank, the Stockyards Bank, and the big post office is located here and the people are employed down there.

Q. And of course there is the city of Chicago, I'm sure there must be someone working there.

A. They're represented in every walk of life. Now Joseph McCarthy, an architect was a member of this parish, and so were his aunts and parents and he was graduated from here. I brought this book down to with the history of St. Gabriel's Church. It's one of the landmarks of Chicago, and the picture of it is

there and on it are three men who wanted the pleasure of seeing this church. It's a perfect example of the Roman Gothic in the best of combinations who built that architecture. It's all in there, I had marked it.

Q. Yes I have it right here now. I see it.

A. Yes, and then we have the Boy's Club -- that's just north of us in this area. Of course, there's a great many people of the adjoining parishes, too, you know, worked there.

Q. Yes.

A. That's why the nativity, the nearest parish is just north of us on the other side of the tracks. From the education standpoint -- the history of the Chicago Public School would bear the names and addresses of where they came from of hundreds of school teachers from here -- both men and women, and then what I told you about Joe McCarthy, the architect. There's Judge Power from here and he's living. Judge McDonald lived in this parish and was from here and remained until his death.

Q. Then you would consider that this neighborhood is a prosperous neighborhood?

A. Well, they pay a good price to the teachers. We have seven lay teachers and they are receiving the salaries, that is not equivalent of course to the public school staff, but everyone that's teaching here has a Masters Degree but they love the atmosphere of the school and you know what the discipline problems

are in the public schools, of course, that could be deleted when your guess is ready. And there's been a history of doctors, now there's Dr. Frank Law whose sons became doctors.

Q. Some of these details perhaps are a little bit too tiny but the general thrust of what you're telling me is extremely interesting. What would you suppose is the sort of like a median income of the people in this community? Are they like \$10,000.00 a year people or are they \$8,000.00? Are they prosperous people?

A. They are and when they can keep the schooling as it is and they are the ones that are supporting it from every standpoint, they are the good steady middle-class backbone people of our own America, because they are generous with what they have. Their children have the best. Very little, very little, are absent from school now. They wouldn't be that way if they didn't have the help. They are social minded and they have one of the finest women's club, they have the men and the women bowling league. Those do not have a car or drive a car, especially amongst the women, the CTA or the Suburban transportation bus comes down here in time to take them to the bowling alley. They have regular clubs that go to the Martinique for their dinner and show, especially when Pat O'Brien is performing there and they make use of many things.

Their children are members of the boy's and girl's club.

Q. That interest me, that the community looks out, to the rest of the city, as you suggest, for entertainment centers, and places to go.

A. They do. They are very conscious of all that and there's many homes that the families have two cars, the young people have cars, they're well-dressed, their weddings are beautiful. Right now they're putting on six nights of a show, all the talent coming from within -- tickets \$2.50; gladly they pay it. The house was sold out for the six nights last week and they've only been soliticing for about ten days, and all that money is turned into the School Fund which goes in for repairs and used for the school.

Q. Well I'm happy to have this lovely talk, and I think I've got it all.