

Oral History Interview Abstract - Unrestricted  
**Interview with Mrs. Helen Gidjunis, February-April, 2013**  
**Oral History 650 by Paula Gidjunis**

**Interviewee/narrator:** Mrs. Helen Gidjunis  
**Interview dates:** February 25, March 5, April 2, 2013  
**Address:** 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
**Number and lengths of recordings:** 7 recordings:  
Mrs Gidjunis 2-25-13A 39:05  
Mrs Gidjunis 2-25-13B 4:00  
Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13 00:24  
Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13A 57:59  
Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13B 21:38  
Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13C 14:03  
Mrs Gidjunis 4-2-13 41:58

**Total minutes of recordings:** 2 hours 59 minutes and 7 seconds  
**Interviewer:** Paula Gidjunis

**Interviewee/narrator:** Mrs. Helen Gidjunis  
**Interview date:** February 25, 2013  
**Address:** 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
**Interviewer:** Paula Gidjunis  
**Time Duration:** 4:00

**Interview topic:** Mrs. Helen Gidjunis is a life-long resident of Philadelphia. The majority of her life she spent growing up in the shadow of La Salle College – now University. She moved to Uber Street in 1934, while La Salle’s groundbreaking occurred on February 29, 1928 at its fourth and current location at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Olney Avenue. She has observed the neighborhood change for seventy-nine years. When she married in 1949, she moved one street west to 20<sup>th</sup> Street. She has been her block captain for many years and still retains that position and as such has served as a liaison between La Salle and her neighborhood. It should be noted that Mrs. Gidjunis is very much concerned with identity theft and did not wish to give her maiden name, her year of birth, nor the birthdates of her children and grandchildren. She has asked to restrict the first segment of her interview, 39:05 minutes of a total of 2 hours and 59 minutes and 7 seconds for five years or upon her death.

**Interview # 2 of 2 on Day 1** - entitled Mrs Gidjunis interview 2-25-13B

**Years span covered by interview:** late 1930’s – 1950’s

Topics discussed: After the phone ringing interruption we began the interview right away as to not lose the momentum. Unfortunately only 4 minutes of this 20-minute interview recorded due to a problem with the memory on my recorder, which was corrected for the follow-up interviews.

00:00 We began with me reminding Mrs. Gidjunis where we left off before the phone rang. We continued to discuss what the La Salle campus was like while she was growing up.

### 00:20 Block Captain

Mrs. Gidjunis talked of the La Salle facilities growing up, but never used any of them. There were not that many facilities at the time, but as an adult she used the library often. She has been the block captain of the 5600 block of 20<sup>th</sup> Street for many years. She was also the treasurer of her block association and she collected the dues and maintained the records of the association. They held their meetings at La Salle. The neighbors held summer camps in Kemble Park and she collected fees and took care of the banking.

### 2:04 Marriage

In 1949, she married Joseph Gidjunis and they lived on Uber Street for seven years with her parents. Her grandmother, who also lived there died in 1950. In May 1956 she and her husband bought her current house at 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street. They moved in that June after they painted and wall papered the house. They did not have a car at the time.

### 3:05 Return to her high school days

She took public transportation to Germantown High School and she really enjoyed going there. She also enjoyed shopping near Germantown High School where there were all kinds of stores. She did most of her shopping there.

Interview ends at 4:00 due to a memory problem with the recorder. The beeping was signaling the lack of memory, but neither Mrs. Gidjunis nor myself ever heard that.

**Interviewee/narrator: Mrs. Helen Gidjunis**

**Interview date: March 5, 2013**

**Address: 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Interviewer: Paula Gidjunis**

**Time Duration: 57:59**

**Interview topic:** Mrs. Helen Gidjunis is a life-long resident of Philadelphia. The majority of her life she spent growing up in the shadow of La Salle College – now University. She moved to Uber Street in 1934, while La Salle’s groundbreaking occurred on February 29, 1928 at its fourth location at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Olney Avenue. She has observed the neighborhood change for seventy-nine years. When she married in 1949, she moved one street west to 20<sup>th</sup> Street. She has been her block captain for many years and still retains that position and as such has served as a liaison between La Salle and her neighborhood. It should be noted that Mrs. Gidjunis is very much concerned with identity theft and did not wish to give her maiden name nor her year of birth nor the birthdates of her children and grandchildren. She has asked to restrict the first segment of her interview 39:05 minutes of a total of 2 hours and 59 minutes and 7 seconds of her interview for five years.

**Interview # 1 of 3 on Day 2** - entitled Mrs Gidjunis interview 3-5-13A

**Years span covered by interview:** 1934-2013

**NOTE:** This segment was not introduced. I added a 24 second introduction after the fact that is placed before this audio that is entitled: Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13

**Topics discussed:** A Phillies Baseball Player living on Uber Street, how she met her husband and his time at La Salle.

00:00 A former Phillies player, Al Hollingsworth rented a house next to her parents at 5632 Uber St.<sup>1</sup> Another player lived across the street on Uber, she does not remember his name. Hollingsworth had two daughters.

00:48 Building of the houses on other streets

The building of the houses on the 5600 20<sup>th</sup> Street block proved to be disruptive to the residents in the neighborhood, especially at mealtime. Due to the solid rock there, the builder needed to use dynamite to level the land for the foundations of those homes. These were completed in 1937. Around 1939 six twins were built on the higher ground on Olney Avenue. [Note at 1:16 I asked her about 20<sup>th</sup> Street and I meant to say Olney Avenue. Mrs. Gidjunis responded stating 20<sup>th</sup> Street, but we both meant Olney Avenue.]

2:20 Meeting Her Husband

Mrs. Gidjunis met her husband Mr. Joseph Gidjunis in 1947, while he was visiting his friend who lived next door to Mrs. Gidjunis. Mr. Gidjunis attended La Salle from 1937-1941. It was not very long after they met that he asked her to a baseball game at Connie Mack Stadium<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Gidjunis grew up at 238 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Frackville, Pennsylvania, which is about 100 miles from Philadelphia. Frackville is in the coal-mining region in central Pennsylvania. His father, Frank Gidjunis, was a coal miner, but Joseph never worked in the mines. His father was born in Lithuania. Mrs. Gidjunis never knew him as he died before she met Mr. Gidjunis. His mother's name was Mary.

6:55 – Mr. Gidjunis Information

Mr. Gidjunis was an Education/History major, though he did not want to teach. Mrs. Gidjunis believes that he should have been involved with something to do with sports since that was “his thing”. He was assistant coach of La Salle College High School football team after graduation for a short time until World War II began. In March 1942, Mr. Gidjunis joined the Army.

He played four sports in high school, baseball, basketball, track, and football. He came to La Salle on a full football scholarship. He also won a baseball scholarship to Penn State, but

he preferred football, so he chose La Salle. He played football for all four years and he played for the entire sixty minutes. Mr. Gidjunis did not talk much about his college years, but he did return for class reunions at La Salle. Mr. Gidjunis lived on campus in the De La Salle Building, which was also the residence of the Christian Brothers.

#### 11:46 Mr. Gidjunis' Occupation

While in college he worked at Snellingsburg's on Market Street, selling shirts and he was also assistant coach to the La Salle College High School football team.<sup>3</sup> He was a Staff Sergeant in the Army and spent most of his time doing administrative work in Hawaii during the war.<sup>4</sup> He served for three years. Then he went to work for Railway Express, which is where he was employed when Mrs. Gidjunis met him.

#### 13:30 How did World War II affect the neighborhood

On Uber Street, many of the young men went off to war. One family possibly the Rocks [she was not 100% sure of the family name] had four or five sons go off to war. She recalls that one son, possibly Patrick, won a medal during the war. He lived across the street on Uber, but does not remember the year or what type of medal.

There was a German Prisoner of War Camp on Ogontz Avenue near Summerville Avenue during the War.<sup>5</sup> A high wall surrounded it and when she stood on a hill at the Central High School parking lot, you could look in and see the prisoners. Mrs. Gidjunis does not remember it bothering anyone that the prison was there. It was very close to Central High School and she recalls the school had recently opened.<sup>6</sup>

#### 17:41 Other Recollections

Mrs. Gidjunis also recalled Saint Basil's a private Catholic elementary school at Lindley and Ogontz Avenues. Mrs. Gidjunis remembers it was located behind the POW camp. St Basil's was later purchased by La Salle and is today the south campus. The Sisters of Saint Basil moved to Jenkintown, Pennsylvania and opened a High School for girls that exists today.<sup>7</sup>

#### 19:48 Mr. Gidjunis' Work Life

Mr. Gidjunis was a supervisor at Railway Express until it went bankrupt in December 1975.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Gidjunis had over thirty years with the company, including his time working there in college and he also received credit for his army years. Unfortunately when the company went bankrupt, he received nothing for his time, there was no money left for pensions.

He did whatever he could to make money after Railway Express closed. He could not get a job in his field of transportation. Railway Express shipped products all over the world. Mrs. Gidjunis did not wish to talk about the various jobs he took after this.

#### 22:42 Mrs. Gidjunis' Work Life

Mrs. Gidjunis did work outside the home. For seven years she worked at the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company. It was located at 6<sup>th</sup> and Walnut streets in Philadelphia. The building is still there, but the company relocated to the suburbs.

When her youngest child was four, she returned to the work force and worked as an assistant Montessori teacher for twelve years. She found this hard taking care of young children, but she studied the Maria Montessori philosophy. She liked where she worked as they utilized the original equipment from Italy and Holland and did things according to Maria Montessori's ideas. She worked in three different schools. First in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia, then two owned by the same owners, one on Willow Grove Avenue in Philadelphia and one in the Meadowbrook/Jenkintown area. She recalls being told that General George Gordon Meade's horse was buried there in the backyard of the Meadowbrook School.<sup>9</sup>

### 27:58 Her Children

Mr. and Mrs. Gidjunis had 3 children, Joseph, Carol and Mark. She did not want to provide the ages of her children or her grandchildren. Where her children live: her oldest, Joseph lives in Cape May County, New Jersey; Carol, her only daughter lives in Southern Shores, North Carolina; her youngest child Mark lives in Cinnaminson, New Jersey. She has 6 grandchildren, Joe, Laura, Michael, Nicholas, Mark Robert, and Catherine.<sup>10</sup>

### 29:50 How they came to buy the house on 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Mrs. Gidjunis, as an only child wanted to remain close to her parents, as they were getting older. When the house on 20<sup>th</sup> Street came up for sale, she and Mr. Gidjunis purchased it.

### 30:39 What was across the street on 20<sup>th</sup> Street when they moved in 1956

She was not 100% positive but believes the first two dorms were already there in 1956. They were perpendicular to the houses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street and because of this they could see the sunset in the evening. They were upset when the dorms directly across on 20<sup>th</sup> Street were built as they blocked the sunsets they could see each night as the front of their house faced West.<sup>11</sup>

### 33:22 The Parking Problem

When La Salle first open at this location, most students were from the city and took public transportation. There was a trolley that ran on Olney Avenue up through 1952, after that it was a bus. Most of the parking problems occurred when students moved into the homes on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. The neighbors were against La Salle buying homes as they went up for sale, but Mrs. Gidjunis wanted La Salle to buy the homes. She believed that if La Salle owned the homes they would have more control over the students. What actually happened after La Salle promised not to buy the homes for rental to students was that speculators bought them, basically absentee landlords. Then there were problems with trash and too many cars.

### 35:42 Closing 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Before La Salle attempted to close 20<sup>th</sup> Street between Belfield and Olney Avenues, there was a good relationship between the neighbors and La Salle. The block captains had many meetings in the old library building at 19<sup>th</sup> Street [Today the David Lawrence Administration Building]. La Salle would invite them to meals and Mrs. Gidjunis remembers receiving Christmas ornaments from the school. But after the 20<sup>th</sup> Street problem, she said going to meetings “wasn’t fun anymore” and she stopped attending meetings. She went to meetings at the Belfield Neighborhood Association. Most of the people opposed to the closing lived on Woodstock, Lambert and 21<sup>st</sup> Streets. Mrs. Gidjunis was for closing it as well as most of the people on 20<sup>th</sup> Street, but some of her neighbors were swayed by other folks and changed their minds. Eventually La Salle settled on having 20<sup>th</sup> Street changed to one-way north.<sup>12</sup>

### 39:00: Mrs. Gidjunis’ position on the closing 20<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mrs. Gidjunis was in favor of closing the street because of the traffic noise created by the dorms and the houses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street being so close to the street. There was a great deal of traffic on 20<sup>th</sup> Street and the noise was terrible in the morning. In the afternoon, the noise is not as much of a problem. Changing the street to one way has eliminated many of the problems she discussed.

The other neighbors’ complaints dealt with the inconvenience of having to drive further to get from Belfield to Olney and the reverse. They claimed that there would be “all kinds of problems” that never materialized. They turned against La Salle because of this. The fighting went on for several years.

### 41:17 David Cohen

The main person behind the protests against closing the street was David Cohen<sup>13</sup> He lived on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and for almost a year would stand on a truck with loudspeakers starting at 7 AM for a couple of hours, complaining about La Salle trying to close the street. Mrs. Gidjunis phoned him to complain about his disruption to the neighbors, but he was not interested. “They had their right to annoy us apparently.”

### 42:36 Disputes with President Patrick Ellis

Mrs. Gidjunis does not recall the disputes over the Dorms and Dining Hall being built in 1980’s, between the neighbors and La Salle. However, she was more concerned about the students living in the houses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. She had disputes with President Brother Patrick Ellis about allowing students in the rental houses. “It destroyed our peace.” Her concern was not with the houses own by La Salle. Houses that La Salle own only housed brothers at this time. However, these eventually were sold to speculators who rented to students. Today one home still houses two brothers. Brother Daniel Burke and Brother Mollenhauer live in the house on 20<sup>th</sup> by the driveway.

#### 46:00 First Black Family

The first black family moved in 1962 next door to Mr. and Mrs. Gidjunis at 5625. They were Inez Morgan and her two daughters, Margaret and Toni who were both single. They lived there until they all eventually died and then a speculator bought them. The house is currently rented to several female La Salle students. [There was a bit of confusion here for me as I was not sure why she was complaining to Brother Ellis about the students moving in since La Salle did not own the homes. I realized afterwards that she wanted Brother Ellis to prevent the students from moving in though La Salle did not own the homes. It was and is still today her position that they are La Salle students and the University should have some control.]

Originally the neighbors did not want La Salle to buy the houses when people started to move out. She thought that was the wrong position. She believed that if La Salle owned the homes, they would have more say in the running of the homes and the neighbors would have someone to bring their complaints. Since the homes are own by absentee landlords, there is little that La Salle can do about neighbors' concerns. Some of these have to do with the numbers of people living in the houses. The houses were to be limited to three students by city ordinance, as there are three bedrooms or four students in the houses on Olney as they have four bedrooms, but many more than that live in the homes. When she complains to La Salle, they tell her that they do not own the houses, but her position is that they are La Salle students.

#### 49:30 Parking restrictions on 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Mrs. Gidjunis was the person who initiated the parking restrictions on her block on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. It became more and more difficult for residents to park on their street. The students would park their cars and not move them for days. It took her some time, but she finally got every household except one on her block to sign the petition. The result is a two-hour parking restriction except for residents who can purchased a permit. Originally the permit was \$10.00 a year, but it is much higher now. She does not know the price as she keeps her car in the garage and does not park on the street. But now over half the houses are rented out by students.

#### 51:31 Residents

Nine out of twenty-two households currently own their houses on the block, the rest are rented. Mrs. Gidjunis is the longest resident living on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. On 19<sup>th</sup> street the parking restrictions are different as each block captain obtained their own restrictions for their block. She has been block captain since the 1960's. In the beginning she had many duties; she does not have much to do currently. Her main job is giving out bags for three neighborhood cleanups a year that the city conducts. She complains that the students never partake in these cleanups. In addition she stated that the block captains no longer have meetings, which used to be held at La Salle in the old Library building [now the Administration building] or the College Union. She still can call the city, police or La Salle with concerns and indicated that she is the block captain. This does gives her a bit of clout, but this has

greatly reduced over time.

54:46 Major change in the neighborhood

Mrs. Gidjunis stated that over the years the major change that concerned her was the students moving into the private houses. She is very distressed over problems parking in the driveways such as students blocking the driveway. They have large cars and the driveways are very narrow. Also, she cites that students are not very responsible with the rubbish that is not contained and often just sitting out on the patios. She states that the “Rubbish looks like a hotel” because there are so many students in the houses. The homes used to be kept up and the trees and lawns used to be beautiful. There were lots of dogwood trees and azaleas.

56:57 Greatest challenge between neighbors and La Salle

Mrs. Gidjunis’ greatest concerns are the noise and the parties coming from the students and trouble driving in and out of the driveway. Reporting the problem to La Salle is difficult. Security tells her to report problems to the police. Sometimes La Salle Security will talk to the students about the problems, but because they live in private houses, there is little that La Salle can do, only the police can take action.

Ends at 57:59

**Interviewee/narrator: Mrs. Helen Gidjunis**

**Interview date: March 4, 2013**

**Address: 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Interviewer: Paula Gidjunis**

**Time Duration: 21:38**

**Interview topic:** Mrs. Helen Gidjunis is a life-long resident of Philadelphia. The majority of her life she spent growing up in the shadow of La Salle College – now University. She moved to Uber Street in 1934, while La Salle’s groundbreaking occurred on February 29, 1928 at its fourth and current location at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Olney Avenue. She has observed the neighborhood change for seventy-nine years. When she married in 1949, she moved one street west to 20<sup>th</sup> Street. She has been her block captain for many years and still retains that position and as such has served as a liaison between La Salle and her neighborhood. It should be noted that Mrs. Gidjunis is very much concerned with identity theft and did not wish to give her maiden name, her year of birth, nor the birthdates of her children and grandchildren. She has asked to restrict the first segment of her interview, 39:05 minutes of a total of 2 hours and 59 minutes and 7 seconds for five years or upon her death.

**Interview # 2 of 3 on Day 2 - entitled Mrs Gidjunis interview 3-4-13B**

**Years span covered by interview: late 1930’s – Present**

00:00 Introduction



### 00:32 Landmarks in the area

I asked Mrs. Gidjunis what she remembered about several neighborhood landmarks. The Chateaux was a nightclub where the Ogontz Manor Apartments [now the Julien Apartments] are today. She remembers sledding down the hill on the property. There was also a small house and a barn. She never went to the nightclub.

Ogontz Manor/Julien Apartments was beautiful when they first were built. Former neighbors of hers moved to the Ogontz Manor, which was later taken over another management company and the property later became neglected. Currently there are new owners and the complex has improved.

There was a Catholic private school, Ancelli Domini, that was on Church Lane. She does not remember much about it. The school was sold and moved to Wyncote when it merged with another school and became Ancillae-Assumpta. She does not recall it being a Jewish Orphanage<sup>14</sup>

She spoke of Saint Basil's Catholic School located on Lindley Avenue. This school eventually was sold and became part of the South campus of La Salle.<sup>15</sup> This was also discussed in the previous segment [Mrs Gidjunis 3-4-13A].

Girls High School [Formal title: Philadelphia High School For Girls ] was built behind the Widener home on Broad Street, where the original gate is located. Girls High was originally on Spring Garden Street in Philadelphia. Today that building houses the Masterman Middle and High Schools. There were empty fields before Girls High School was built.<sup>16</sup>

Mrs. Gidjunis remembers around Summerville Avenue there were woods where Central High School is today.<sup>17</sup> There were bridal wreath bushes along Ogontz and Olney Avenues. Central High School was there before Girls High School. She would pick violets in the woods where Central High is now. She ran into a homeless man in the woods by herself once, there was no harm to her. There were very few homeless in those days. There were places for people with mental problems.

There was no dissention in the neighborhood when Central and Girls High Schools were built in the Olney area. There were no houses near the schools. The traffic increased at this time and more people had cars.

Mrs. Gidjunis remembers the name Manna Bible Institute, but does not remember anything about the Institute.<sup>18</sup>

She remembers The Good Shepard Home at Chew and Wister Streets. This was a Catholic home for girls with a variety of problems.<sup>19</sup>

### 10:10 Neighborhood Organizations

Mrs. Gidjunis remembered the Belfield Area Neighborhood Association that held their

meetings at the Belfield Recreation Center. It was located in East Germantown on the other side of Chew, north of 20<sup>th</sup>, between 20<sup>th</sup> and Wister and Chew and Nedro. [Neither one of us could think of the term Recreation Center.]

She was a member of the 1723 Neighborhood Organization the number represented the polling ward. This organization encompassed the area from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Streets and Chew to Olney Avenues. Each block had its own captain.

### 13:10 Her favorite memory of living in the neighborhood

Shopping on Germantown Avenue, her church and school where her children attended are some of her favorite memories. Her church is Holy Child. All 3 of her children went there. Mr. Gidjunis was the baseball coach and assistant coach for the Catholic Youth Organization's [CYO] baseball and basketball teams. She would drive the kids to games. Mr. Gidjunis received many awards given out by the Catholic Youth Organization for his coaching work.

Holy Child parish was combined with two other parishes to become Our Lady of Hope many years ago. Saint Stephen's at Broad and Erie and Poor Souls at 19<sup>th</sup> and Tioga were the two parishes that closed. She did not understand the name change, since Holy Child remained open. The church still has "Holy Child" on the building. The school closed two years ago as there were not enough students to keep it open.

She discussed her children's high school years.

### 19:04 Neighbors using La Salle facilities

La Salle allowed the neighbors to use the Gym at Tom Gola Arena. She never used the gym. She has gone to the library to make copies, but doesn't do that anymore. She can get a card for the library, Gym, Library and take books out. I walked on the track at McCarthy stadium. She has taken visitors to the Art Museum. Her cousin was a nun and she had graduated from Girls High when it was on Spring Garden street.

I ended it here and was going to continue at another time as I thought she was getting tired. But after shutting the recorder off, Mrs. Gidjunis said she was willing to continue a bit more. So we continued after a short break.

**Interviewee/narrator: Mrs. Helen Gidjunis**

**Interview date: March 4, 2013**

**Address: 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Interviewer: Paula Gidjunis**

**Time Duration: 14:03**

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1928 at its fourth and current location at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Olney Avenue. She has observed the neighborhood change for seventy-nine years. When she married in 1949, she moved one street west to 20<sup>th</sup> Street. She has been her block captain for many years and still retains that position and as such has served as a liaison between La Salle and her neighborhood. It should be noted that Mrs. Gidjunis is very much concerned with identity theft and did not wish to give her maiden name, her year of birth, nor the birthdates of her children and grandchildren. She has asked to restrict the first segment of her interview, 39:05 minutes of a total of 2 hours and 59 minutes and 7 seconds for five years or upon her death.

**Interview # 3 of 3 on Day 2** - entitled Mrs Gidjunis interview 3-4-13C

**Years span covered by interview:** late 1960's – Present

00:00 Introduction

00:30 Population Change

As Mrs. Gidjunis mentioned previously, the first Black family moved into the area next door to them. Mr. and Mrs. Gidjunis became friends with their neighbors. Mr. Gidjunis did their lawn for them gratis and Mrs. Gidjunis took them to church and the Carmelite Monastery at 66<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Old York Road.

2:00 Carmelite Monastery

The Carmelite Sisters live at the Monastery. Mother Superior Barbara heads the group of eight nuns. They live cloister lives. Years ago doctors would go to the monastery to treat the sisters. Later as doctors no longer made house calls, volunteers such as Mrs. Gidjunis took the sisters to the doctors. While no longer doing that, Mrs. Gidjunis still does their banking for them. She speaks to them through a turn [screen]. Mrs. Gidjunis attends novenas at the Carmelite Monastery and sell items for them at their shop, such as books, DVDs, and CDs. She has volunteered for the nuns for over 25 years. Mr. Gidjunis spent many years landscaping for them.

5:28 Moving

She would consider moving if she could no longer drive or felt that she could not live in the house alone. Her children do not live close enough to help her there. She would move to her daughter's house in North Carolina.

6:06 Enjoying the area

Mrs. Gidjunis did enjoy living in the area, especially before the students moved into the homes on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. It is very stressful for her now, especially when they are next door. She is happy when it is spring break. Parking is so much better.

Snow is her biggest worry. Students will not clear their walks during snowstorms. She thinks La Salle should shovel their walks since so many students live on the street. The

President of La Salle lives on Olney Avenue and he has his driveway shoveled.

9:31 Faculty she knew

Mrs. Gidjunis did know some of the brothers who taught at La Salle. She remembers when they wore the long black gowns. However, she cannot remember their names.

10:55 Relatives and friends

She could not get relatives to visit as most lived in Delaware County. There was a distance for them to travel and some would not visit because of the neighborhood. Some of her friends did not meet as often because they were married and lived in different places. She used to get together with her friends at the Kimberton Inn near Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. [Long pause as she thought about anything else she wanted to add, but then did not.]

13:11 We talked about another follow-up interview. I thanked her for her time and help.

**Interviewee/narrator: Mrs. Helen Gidjunis**  
**Interview date: April 2, 2013**  
**Address: 5623 N. 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**  
**Number and lengths of recordings: 1, 41:58**  
**Total minutes of recordings:**  
**Interviewer: Paula Gidjunis**  
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**File: Mrs Gidjunis 4-2-13**

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**Interview #1 of 1 on Day 3 – Entitled Mrs Gidjunis interview 4-2-13**

**Years span covered by interview:** 1970's to present

**Topics discussed:** Mr. Gidjunis returning to La Salle, her painting, stopping a robber and being assaulted on Olney Avenue.

00:00 Introduction - I stated my name, the name of the interviewee, the location of the interview and the date. I asked and received permission to record our conversation.

#### 00:45 Her children going to La Salle, Christian Brothers living on 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Besides Mr. Gidjunis going to La Salle, her son Mark went to La Salle with a degree in Accounting, Joe attended Temple on a baseball scholarship and received his MBA from La Salle. Her daughter Carol received her nursing degree from Germantown Nursing School and took some classes at La Salle. Joe also played football and baseball at La Salle College High School. La Salle College High School was in Wyncote at this time. Carol had been a registered nurse for 26 years.

#### 4:35 Faculty living on 20<sup>th</sup> Street

Over the years many of the Christian Brothers and lay faculty lived on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. At one time there were eight people with Ph.Ds. living on the street. Currently Brother Mollenhauer lives on 20<sup>th</sup> Street and she also believes that Brother Daniel Burke lives there also.

6:25 She does not remember La Salle's Centennial celebration in 1963. She does remember going to Mr. Gidjunis' class of 1941 reunions over the years. The science professor, Roland Holroyd was in that class also. The reunions were held on campus. When the football program was reinstated in 1997, she remembers attending a dinner in the Peale House. The football program had ended in 1942 because of World War II. She was not sure when the football program began again. When it began again, Mr. Gidjunis was invited to handle the coin toss at the beginning of the first game.<sup>20</sup> She does not know if any of his class went on play pro football.

10:11 Mr. Gidjunis received a letter from the Detroit Lions to try out for the team, but he went into the service. He played 60 minutes and played a variety of positions.

11:28 She started painting when her youngest son was in high school. She painted from the late 1970's to the early 1980's. There were painting classes held at Cardinal Dougherty at night and she attended those. She started out with calligraphy, but it was hard on her eyes, so she gave that up and started oil painting. She had done some painting when her daughter was at Pennell Elementary School. A famous artist visited the school who had designed costumes for movies. His name was John Geissal.<sup>21</sup> She did pastels at that time. They eventually closed the night school at Cardinal Dougherty and she continued for a time at the Lawncrest Recreation Center.<sup>22</sup> However when her painting teacher stopped teaching, Mrs. Gidjunis also stopped and has not painted since. She does not think she would have continued painting as her mother became ill and then later her husband.

#### 16:13 Memories of watching my son, "Joey"

She remembers going to his baseball games. She took him to La Salle many times. They use to sit on the porch where the art studio was. The library and gym were not there.<sup>23</sup>

Cottage Lane was there.

#### 17:17 The Pretzel Man

The Pretzel Man and his truck was a fixture at 20<sup>th</sup> and Olney Streets for years. He was from Greece. He also sold sodas, hot dogs, candy and a variety of other items. Later his cousin took over the food stand for several years. Eventually the business was sold to someone who did not last very long. This was in the 1980's. There was also a barber on campus and she would drive Mr. Gidjunis to the school in later years as he could not walk by himself. She does not remember the barber's name nor the Pretzel Man's name.

#### 20:45 George the dog

George the dog was bought at the pound. He was a biter and did not like people outside the family. He died when he was 9 from some type of rheumatoid problem. A car also hit him. She still has his ashes.

#### 22:58 Stopping a Robbery

Mrs. Gidjunis stopped a robbery at the house of Dan Rodden on 20<sup>th</sup> Street. While walking the dog, she saw a young man breaking into his door. She actually confronted him and asked what he was doing before she called the police. She then returned home, called the police and then went to Mr. Rodden's house and found the door open. She saw the young man in the house, she screamed and he ran out passed her. The police arrived at that time and caught him. He was seventeen and had been living with an aunt and uncle in the neighborhood. He had used a gun on another robbery. She believes this happened in the 1970's.

#### 26:58 Assaulted on Olney Avenue

Someone living in the Ogontz Apartments in July 1982 assaulted her at 18th and Olney. Her mother was in Einstein Hospital and she decided to walk home along Olney Avenue. He knocked her down and dragged her across Olney Avenue as he grabbed her purse, but the straps were stuck around her arm. A policeman who lived on 18<sup>th</sup> Street heard her screaming, stopped the guy, but he let him go after taking her purse off of the assailant. He returned the purse to Mrs. Gidjunis. She had to go to court, but there were other cases that day, so she does not know what happened to this person. Another policeman in a patrol car did come out. She thinks he was called by the first policeman. They wanted to take her to the hospital, but she did not want to go, so they took her home. She never went to the doctors about this though she was very bruised. She still considers herself lucky, since many of her neighbors have been robbed.

#### 35:26 A bike stolen

Mark her youngest, was robbed of his bike on 20<sup>th</sup> Street when he was twelve. A man jumped out of a car, punched Mark, knocked him down and rode off on the bike and another

man drove off in the car. She got her car and tried to find the bike, but she never did. “We had a dangerous neighborhood”. The neighborhood was fine when she moved in, but the neighborhood changed and became more dangerous.

#### 37:54 Students moved into the houses

About fifteen years ago, the first students moved into the house. She was very upset about them moving in and spoke to Brother Patrick Ellis about allowing this. She is still upset that La Salle did not buy the homes because she believes this would have given La Salle control. Eventually, absentee landlords would buy the house and rented to the students. Brother Ellis was for the students moving in the rented houses because it was cheaper for the students. The houses have more students than are legally allowed.

#### 39:59 A cousin teaching at La Salle

She had a cousin who was a professor at La Salle, Brother Bill Ronner and they are both related to Carl Ronner who was a famous theologian on her Mother’s side. Ronner was her great-grandmother’s maiden name.

41:20 I thanked her for all her time and we ended the interview.

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<sup>1</sup> Al Hollingsworth played professional baseball from 1935 to 1946. Two of those years 1938 and 39 he played for the Phillies and lived at 5632 Uber St.

<sup>2</sup> Connie Mack Stadium was originally named Shibe Park but in 1938 the name was changed. She does not remember whether they saw the Phillies or the Athletics. The Athletics left Philadelphia in 1955.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Philadelphia\\_Athletics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Philadelphia_Athletics)

<http://www.projectballpark.org/history/nl/shibe.html>

<http://phillysportshistory.com/tag/connie-mack-stadium/>

<sup>3</sup> “Snellenburg's was a Philadelphia based middle class department store and wholesale clothing manufacturer, established in 1869. The company became the largest clothing manufacturer in the world and at one time employed 3,000.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.\\_Snellenburg\\_%26\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N._Snellenburg_%26_Company)

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Gidjunis could not remember Mr. Gidjunis’ Army rank. She referred me to a case that held the flag that draped his coffin. On there is a metal label that provides his name and rank.

<sup>5</sup> National Guard Armory branch camp, Philadelphia

[http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/local/courier\\_times\\_news/museum-unlocks-history-of-pow-camps/article\\_b9e394bb-47da-552c-89ff-0bd20a5a3763.html](http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/local/courier_times_news/museum-unlocks-history-of-pow-camps/article_b9e394bb-47da-552c-89ff-0bd20a5a3763.html)

<sup>6</sup> The war ended in 1945, she though 46 or 37. Central High School moved to its current site in 1939. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central\\_High\\_School\\_\(Philadelphia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_High_School_(Philadelphia))

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.stbasilacademy.org/history.htm>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.american-rails.com/railway-express-agency.html>

<sup>9</sup> The Meadowlane Montessori School is still located at 616 Meetinghouse Rd., Jenkintown, Pa. It once was the Meadowbrook Farm where the horse of General Meade, the Union General who won the battle of Gettysburg was sent to live after General Meade died in 1872. When his horse, Old Baldy died in 1882, his head was cut off and stuffed and is on display at the Grand Army of the Republic Library and Museum at 4278 Griscom Street, Philadelphia, Pa. The rest of his body remains buried behind the school.

<http://www.meadowlanemontessori.com>

<http://garmuslib.org>

<sup>10</sup> Joe is my son (the interviewer), which causes the laughter. She sometimes refers to him as Joey, as that was what we called him as a young child.

<sup>11</sup> The two first dorms opposite 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Saint Bernard and Saint Albert were opened in 1953. Saint Cassian and Saint Denis followed them in 1956.

These are perpendicular to the houses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street so they did not block their view. In 1966, Saint Hilary and Saint Jerome were built directly facing the 20<sup>th</sup> Street homes, blocking their view of the sunset.

<sup>12</sup> Original La Salle wanted to close 20<sup>th</sup> Street, but there was a loud outcry by some of the neighbors. There were many meetings that became so intensive Mrs. Gidjunis stopped attending the meetings. The change to one way occurred in 2004.

[http://articles.philly.com/2004-06-22/news/25369530\\_1\\_permanent-closure-council-meeting-protests](http://articles.philly.com/2004-06-22/news/25369530_1_permanent-closure-council-meeting-protests)

<sup>13</sup> David Cohen was a Philadelphia at-large Councilman on the Philadelphia City Council.

<sup>14</sup> “Located on Church Lane at Chew Avenue, the Philadelphia Jewish Home and Orphan Asylum opened in the 1880’s and closed in the early 1950’s. It was sold and became Ancelli Domini Academy. Ancelli Domini merged with another school in the 1970’s and became the Ancillae-Assumpta Academy in Wyncote, Pennsylvania.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.stbasilacademy.org/history.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Girls High is actually called The Girls' Normal School was established as the first secondary public school for girls in Pennsylvania, and the first municipally supported normal school in the United States.” It had a variety of sites, but moved to Broad Street from 17<sup>th</sup> and Spring Garden Streets. It is currently located at 1400 W. Olney Ave in 1958.

<http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/schools/g/girlshigh/about-us/our-history>

<sup>17</sup> Central High School was built at its current location, 1700 W. Olney Avenue in 1940.

<http://www.centralhigh.net/pages/CentralHigh>

<sup>18</sup> The Manna Bible School was located on the land on Church Lane that Ancilli Domini occupied. It purchased the land from the school and it appears to be the last owner before La Salle purchased it.

<http://www.mannabileinstitute.com/About-Us.html>

<sup>19</sup> This has evolved into the Good Shepard Mediation Program

<http://www.phillymediators.org/contact-us>

<sup>20</sup> The football program actually ended in 1941 due to World War II. It was reinstated in 1997 and ended in 2007. As of this interview there is no longer a football program at La Salle. [http://www.lasalle.edu/univcomm/2007/football\\_program.html](http://www.lasalle.edu/univcomm/2007/football_program.html)

<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Gidjunis was not sure of the spelling of his name. My attempts to find who this person was not successful despite searching on a variety of spellings of his name.



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<sup>22</sup> Lawncrest Recreation Center is still open and is operated by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department. It is located at 6000 Rising Sun Avenue in the Lawncrest section of Philadelphia. <http://www.phila.gov/findrec/RecCenterDetails.aspx?ID=777>

<sup>23</sup> Actually Hayman Hall was there, it was built in the early 1970's. My son was born in the early 1980's. However, the library was not there, it was open in 1988.