

Ernest Goodner

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ERNEST GOODMAN

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ERNEST GOODMAN: I was born in Hemlock, Michigan, moved to nearby Kawkawlin until the age of five then lived in Detroit <sup>UNTIL</sup> the present. I lived the life of a young Jewish kid growing up in Detroit's ghetto. I went to Hebrew school and to synagogue services regularly. My family kept a Kosher house. I had that sort of upbringing. We lived first on Adelaide street which is downtown now. Over the years, we moved north to Brady, to Garfield, to Palmer, to Euclid, then across Woodward Avenue to the west side--Clairmount, Burlingame.

The Jewish ghetto before it moved to the west side of Woodward Avenue, consisted of housing which was always infested by cockroaches and the bedbugs. Rats were another enemy which you had to be constantly chasing, avoiding and destroying. These ghetto scenes have always been a sharp part of the recollection of my childhood, over the years.

To the south of the Jewish ghetto lived the black community in its own ghetto. As we moved north, the black people would take over the ghetto housing of the Jewish people.

I lived this kind of a life, a completely Jewish life. I didn't know any Gentile people, hardly at all.

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You didn't have cars, and people lived near where they worked and near where the synagogue was, and with other Jewish people, also where all their relatives were. It was an insular life for many, most of those years as a child.

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I went through Central High School, and the experiences there were tied into the Jewishness of my life, especially in being singled out as Jewish and not being able to participate in the life of the non-Jewish students who politically ran the school. It resulted, during the last part of my school, as a bloody battle that occurred between the roughhouse Jewish guys who had an organized gang pretty much, out of which grew the Purple Gang in the late 1920s. They were our friends because they protected us. This battle between the WASPS and the Jews there did open my eyes to the nature of our society. Where we lived too, in the process of moving from place to place, there were always battles going on, usually in our neighborhoods, between the Poles and the Jews. If you go past the border line, you were likely to get beaten up. If they came over, some of the guys on our side would reciprocate.

When the Depression came and I was faced with it,