

## Assignment Four — Final Project

### **Oral History Interview of Gordon Grosscup**

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LIS7770\_Fall15

Wayne State University

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## Topic:

- Oral history interview to gather details about the continuing evolution of the Cass Corridor area of Detroit, Michigan. *2015-11-21 at 1pm*

## Initial Questions:

1. Biographical (approximately 5-10 minutes)
  - Where and when were you born?
  - Could you please describe your immediate family?
  - What was it like growing up?
  - Where you brought up in any particular religion or religious faith?
  - Did you have strong community ties in your formative years?
  - Where did attend grade University? Did you enjoy school?
  - Did you encounter anything early on in life that lead you to a career in Anthropology and teaching later in life?
  - Your career at Wayne State was prolific and distinguished, what part of your work are you most proud of, and why?
  - How did the Museum of Anthropology at Wayne State come to bear your name?
2. Residency and Reasons (30 minutes)
  - When did you arrive in Detroit?
  - What were the reasons for settling in the Cass Corridor?
  - How long have you been active in the community?
  - What attracted you to the area?
  - Can you describe what the neighborhood was like around the time you arrived?
    - i. Foot traffic? Public and alternative transportation options?
    - ii. What was it like out on the streets?
    - iii. Were there a lot of businesses?
    - iv. Did residents have ready access to groceries, doctors, etc.
    - v. What does living in the Cass Corridor mean to you?
      - Has your opinion changed over time?
      - Can you speculate on what it means to your neighbors?
    - vi. Was there a lot of crime?
    - vii. Was there a police presence in the area?
    - viii. Were you ever a victim of a crime in the Cass Corridor?
    - ix. Have you ever witnessed a crime in your neighborhood?
  - What were some advocacy groups you were involved with after moving to the Cass Corridor?
  - What were some of the larger challenges that your advocacy faced?
  - What were some of the challenges that ended as lamentable failures, if any?
  - What are the names of some of those people who you worked with?
3. Commerce, art, consumerism (20 minutes)
  - Do you enjoy beer?

- What do you think about what is being referred to as “The Canfield beer corridor”?
  - Is this a positive for the neighborhood?
  - Do you find it ironic that a beer tourism industry would grow so rapidly in an area formerly known for its high number of alcoholics and half-way houses?
  - To what extent can recent achievements in the Cass Corridor be attributed to citizen groups past and present, e.g. Concerned Citizens of Cass Corridor, West Canfield Historic Preservation, North Cass Community Union?
  - To what extent can the areas recent rebound be attributed to companies and non-profits, e.g. Midtown, Inc., Cass Corridor Neighborhood Corporation, Second Avenue Merchants and Residents Association, Preservation Detroit, Detroit Historic Preservation Committee?
  - What are some of the businesses that you support in the Corridor?
  - What are your thoughts about some of the newer, high-end retail that has been established in the past few years, e.g. Shinola, Wills Leather, RUNDetroit, Third Man Records? How do these places differ from the older businesses in the area?
  - Were you a member of the Cass Corridor Food Co-Operative?
  - Where do you buy your groceries most often these days?
  - Do you garden your own food?
  - What of the move of Cinema Detroit to 4126 3<sup>rd</sup> St. from the old Chinatown areas at Peterboro and Cass?
  - What are your thoughts about the art scene in the Corridor?
  - Do you follow art? Who are some of your favorite local artists?
4. Community/Current events, Social Services, population. (10 minutes – time permitting)
- Dally in the Alley; North Cass Community Garden; Noel Night; DLECTRICITY; Marche du Nain Rouge
  - Cass Community Social Services; Matrix Human Services; United Community Housing Coalition
  - Has the Cass Corridor found sustainability in terms of population growth? Affluence?
  - Is it more or less attractive for a person to live in Cass Corridor now as opposed to any other time?
  - Is income disparity an issue? What are the factors in maintaining the Cass Corridor’s recent prosperity?
  - Do you think that the worst is in the past?
  - What do you envision for the future of the Cass Corridor?
  - Is there any work left undone?
  - Thank you.

## Description:

### Title:

Cass Corridor Evolution 2015 Oral History Project. Gordon Grosscup [sound recording].

### Description:

369.6 MB WAV (.wav) file; 1 sound file (01:09:51) : digital.

### Access:

Collection is open for research, "all rights reserved."

### Summary (MARC – 520):

Gordon Grosscup was interviewed as a part of Wayne State University's LIS 7770, Fall 2015 class, "*Oral History: A Methodology for Research*" where as a final project the instructor Kim Schroeder assigned students to the "*Cass Corridor Oral History Project*." These interviews cover long-time residents in the eclectic area of Detroit known as the Cass Corridor in order to capture the stories and remembrances of selected individuals.

### Cite as:

Grosscup, G. (2015, November 21). *Cass Corridor Oral History Project*. (P. Neirink, Interviewer). Walter P. Reuther Library. Detroit, MI.

### Note (MARC - 535):

Original audio recordings are available at the Walter P. Reuther Library. Also available online in audio/mpeg format.

### Provenance:

*Cass Corridor Oral History Project: Gordon Grosscup* was conducted solely by Paul S. Neirink for Wayne State University's Walter P. Reuther Library.

### Index (EAD):

Brown, Henry

Burton, Clara

Christenson, James

Davies, Ken

Edwards, Ben

Groehn Croxford, Beulah

Grosscup, Gordon

Howard, Carolyn

Lowell, Scott

Marsh, Bill

Marsh, Don

McClain, W. Martin

Miller, George

Schroeder, Kim  
Vincent, Dick

Subjects (LOC):

Anthropologists--United States. (MARC – 150)  
Cass Corridor (Detroit, Mich.) (MARC – 151)  
Detroit (Mich.)--History--20th century. (MARC – 651)  
Grosscup, Gordon L. (Gordon Leonard) (MARC – 600)  
University of California, Berkeley (MARC – 110)  
University of California, Los Angeles (MARC – 110)  
University of Utah (MARC – 110)  
Wayne State University (MARC – 110)

Added Authors:

Neirink, Paul S. – interviewer (MARC – 700)  
Grosscup, Gordon – interviewee (MARC – 700)

Added Titles:

Cass Corridor Oral History Project Interviews, 2015

Transcript:

Paul: Okay, my name is Paul Neirink and I'm interviewing Gordon Grosscup on Nov. 21st, 2005 [2015] and we're to discuss the evolution of the area known as the Cass Corridor in Detroit, Michigan. Gordon, can we start with some biographical information, for example, where and when were you born?

Gordon: I was born January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1927 in San Francisco, California. And I grew up there... I had an older brother, we, ah, went to the local schools -- Longfellow Grammar School, Balboa High School.

Paul: These were public schools?

Gordon: Yeah, they were public schools. There was one semester in James Denman Junior High school, which was brand new at the time so they were phasing it in. And I graduated with the class of 1943, Fall of 1943, from Balboa High School and started at the University of California at Berkeley the following year... In 1944. I lived at home and commuted to Berkeley for my undergraduate work there, but after three semesters which as just one year at the time because the war was on I was drafted into the Navy into the ante program and I was in there until about, I think it was about June of 1946.

Paul: So just after the Second World War?

Gordon: It was just at the end of it. I was in boot camp when Roosevelt died. So technically I'm a World War II veteran, but I never actually finished the school. I had a couple of weeks to go, but the war was over so they shut down the program and we all got discharged, except the one guy who was regular Navy (chuckles) he was stuck in there but um, then I went back the university of California at Berkeley, ah, started in 1947, graduated in 1950.

Paul: And what was your degree in 1950?

Gordon: That was just a, the ah, Bachelor of Arts. I got my Masters from Berkeley, I believe it was 1958. Same year I went, I transferred to UCLA. And that's where I got my PhD. Dealing with the ceramics from a site in west Mexico that, ah, a batch of us had excavated. While I was working on my dissertation, I got a job teaching at the University of Utah. Initially, to take the place of a faculty member who was on leave. When he came back and that became a head of the museum. I was the person who did archeological survey work for highway construction, and stuff like that. And then I got my PhD finally from UCLA in 1964. And at that time I got the job at Wayne State.

Paul: What year did you get the job at Wayne State?

Gordon: 1964 starting in the Fall Semester.

[4:30]

Paul: Was it always your intention to, ah, be a teacher? To teach?

Gordon: Ah, well. As an archeologist at that time it was pretty much the only outlet. Later there was a lot more contract archeology and jobs in that genre, but ah, I, once I got in to the anthropology department I assuming I would be teaching. Actually I started out as a chemistry major. I had done well in chemistry in high school and was encouraged by the teacher there (Ms. Smith) but by the time I finished the third semester I was aware that I really wasn't learning absorbing chemistry the way I should. When I came back from the Navy I shopped around and took anthro courses and a geology course and I had already taken a biology course. Found I did much better in those courses than I had did in chemistry so I switched to anthropology.

Paul: So 1964, Wayne State, um, was it merely a job that brought you here, or was there anything more to it?

Gordon: Well, I had applied to several different universities at the time. And, ah, my first acceptance, uh, as suggestion that I join them was from Wayne. And I agreed in part because I already knew two of the faculty members here. Arnold Pilling, who had been a graduate student at Berkeley. And ah, James Christenson, who I had met when I was at the University of Utah. He was from Utah and came back every summer to visit relatives. So he always dropped around the department of anthro at Utah. I subsequently got an offer from the University of Tennessee. Which, I sometimes wonder what it would have had been like if I had taken that job.

Paul: Hmm... Tennessee. Hmm... Well, I know Detroit in 1964, like, um..., like always, was very a dynamic and interesting place. What were your first impressions on coming to Detroit?

Gordon: Well, I remember driving in. I had the feeling it was like Los Angeles without the palm trees. (laughter) But, ah, curiously, when I came in... It was on a Sunday and I got a room at the Balmoral Hotel, which at that time was on Third between Canfield and Prentis.

Paul: Okay.

Gordon: On the west side of Third.

Paul: right.

Gordon: And uh, I called the Pilling's to let them know I was in town. They lived on Forest near Fourth at that time. And I asked them about a place to go get something to eat, and they mentioned the White Cafe down on Third. So I went down and had something to eat. Walked back on the other side of the street, past what is what was known as Anderson's Gardens (Anderson's Garden), and, which I found out later, was a notorious prostitute bar.

Paul: I think there were a lot of that happening in the...

Gordon: Oh yes.

Paul: ...in the Cass Corridor.

Gordon: After I past Anderson's Gardens, there was, at that time, a number of buildings there with entrances right on the sidewalk and then past one of the entrances there was a man standing there and he called out that he could get me whatever I wanted, black or white.

Paul: Oh boy.

(laughter)

Gordon: But I got back to the Balmoral and the Pilling's had me over that evening and there were other students and faculty there. And, I met a student who advised me there was a vacancy in his apartment building on Prentis, which I was able to get the next day. And.... that was at the, the Franzen. It's on Prentis near Third, and um, fourth floor walk-up. The student was George Miller. I don't know if you've ever heard of him. He... He never. He never wanted to actually get a degree, so he left here without having finished his bachelors. but uh, Pilling noticed that he had an incomplete for George and if he finished that incomplete he could graduate. So Pilling gave him the grade and walked the papers through and graduated him whether he wanted to, or not.

Paul: Hmm...

Gordon: Subsequently, George has become very well known in historic archeology and he did, I believe, get a masters from another university. But I still hear from him every once in a while. Anywho, ah... I lived there at Prentis until 1969.

[10:15]

Paul: As a renter.

Gordon: As a renter, yes. (incomprehensible) When I first started, they wanted to be paid by the week, and I convinced them to so I could pay by the month. The building was owned at that time by Clara Burton, who was the wife of Governor Burton on the Board of Governors. Interesting enough, ah, she didn't rent to blacks at the time. Although... she made a point of telling you that she was African-American, although, she wasn't any darker than my mother who was English.

Paul: Did you notice a lot of segregation in the Cass Corridor in that period?

Gordon: Not a lot, but then I didn't know what was going on particularly in other buildings and rentals. I wasn't shopping around or anything. And nobody complained. Actually at one point George segregated the building he was going away for the

summer, so he sub-let to another student who actually was a god-send of Mrs. Burton, but he was only there for that short summer and I don't know that any other African-American ever moved in there while Mrs. Burton owned it. It was later owned I believe by Bill Marsh was a major real estate person in the neighborhood. He owned the ABC building on Second and Prentis, and a number of other buildings in the neighborhood, but he was a major factor in turning the Cass Corridor into Midtown.

Paul: Oh, okay. Umm... So the conversion from the Cass Corridor into what we refer to now as Midtown kind of has its roots back in the 60's and early 70's?

Gordon: Yeah, in the 60's... Actually the reason I bought where I did in '69, was one, I had just got tenure.

Paul: That's fantastic.

Gordon: And I wanted to stay in walking distance of the campus. And, Mrs. Pilling at a local history conference introduced me to Mrs. Groehn who already lived on West Canfield.

Paul: Beautiful neighborhood.

Gordon: And, Mrs. Groehn invited me to come down and look at a couple of houses that were available on west canfield, and so I went went down and checked out a couple and decided on the house that I've eventually bought.

Paul: At that point in time were the houses on that block in disrepair blighted, or where they nice?

(chuckles)

Paul: Mixed?

Gordon: Some were well maintained. Dr. Wall, from the English Department, had lived on the block for sometime, and he had a well maintained building. The building that the Groehn's lived in was was built well maintained. most of the others had problems. Ah, Mine was actually was boarded-up vandalized and closed by the board of health. I found that the water meter and the hot water heater were gone. The roof leaked like a sieve. Half the windows were broken. The upstairs toilet didn't work at all. The downstairs (toilet) could only be flushed with a bucket of water from the bathtub. But I was able to... get what turned out to be a second land contract. I couldn't get a mortgage at this time even though I had tenure at Wayne. And, um... at the beginning it was a first land contract, but I only learned out later it was a second land contract. The owners were still paying off their land contract with the original owners, who had moved to Holland, Michigan. I assumed after the riots in '67, but I'm not sure about that. Anyhow, I was able to purchase the house. it cost 21,000 a thousand of that was supposed to be for back taxes. And, once I had the roof fixed and the water going

again, I moved in from the apartment on Prentis.

[15:20]

Paul: And you became a homeowner in the late 60's? When was this?

Gordon: Well, this was '69.

Paul: '69

Gordon: Yeah. Fall of '69. And I spent a lot of time and money subsequently fixing the place up. By the mid 70's I had gotten tired of that, but I still haven't finished fixing up the house. There's more room than I need although it was one of the smaller houses on the block. most of its repairs are maintenance rather than getting back to the damage that had been done earlier on. But it's totally functional house. Things do keep going wrong. And, you know, the house before I bought it before it was closed down had been a rooming house. Umm... The people owned it also owned the house next door. Originally, the before the riots anyway, the owners of the two houses were Mr. and Mrs. Bagdasarian and their two daughters. And they lived in my house on the first floor and rented the rooms out on the second floor. The house next door was divided into four units. when I bought, the house next door still had one tenant. A Mrs. Yee, an elderly Chinese woman who didn't speak English. After I bought my house, two guys bought the house next door and they evicted Mrs. Yee. but um. They each took an apartment on the first floor and rented out the upstairs. At that time there was a house across the street. that would be 628 West Canfield, which was for sale. And I looked at that, too. It had last been a Baptist church and there was a cement block building in the backyard with a baptistry in it, and so on. As well as a carriage house and three story building is much too big for one person, but even my is too big for one person, but it meets my needs and that's enough. (mutters) the current tenants of that house are Mr. and Mrs., or Dr. and Mrs. W. Martin McClain who was in the Chemistry department. He is retired now, but umm... I think they bought back sometime in the 70's and are still working fixing up their place. They had two daughters, who are grown up and gotten married and moved away.

Paul: It's interesting that you talk about these big houses on West Canfield being kind of partitioned into apartments and a shared sort of living experience.

Gordon: mhmm (agreement).

Paul: I think that's kind of indicative of the make-up of the neighborhood. Meaning that maybe a lot of people weren't home owners because they were impoverished. Did you notice a lot of poverty? What did the neighborhood kind of look like when you were looking to buy a home?

Gordon: Well... you can't tell by looking at people. I think there were more beggars on the street at the time. there was fairly obvious there were guys on corners selling drugs and there was active prostitution, street walkers, literally that were quite recognizable

even if you didn't talk to them. And that has all disappeared at this point. At one point, the house next door, which has changed hands quite a bit since the two guys bought it, there was a couple in there who were selling drugs out of the house and that was actually raided and closed down... There has been a couple of murders in the neighborhood. Umm... The renters that I got to know a bit in the neighborhood were largely retired people. Most of them white, a few blacks in the neighborhood. At one-point next door to me and directly across from where Kim (Schroeder) lives, what is a condominium now, it was a small apartment house. Initially when I bought it was owned by Ken Davies who actually boarded with his wife and children in the Dr. Wall's house next door. And umm... It was eventually bought by Bill Marsh who turned it from an apartment house into condominiums and the first condominium buyer was an African-American who lived there until about two years ago and he was foreclosed and had to move out. but ah, there was at one time or another an African-American in that building and other buildings on the block. At present, I don't know if there are any living on the block. There is one house that's being renovated, I guess, and that is still owned by an African-American, but she doesn't live there. And I think that she may have sold it to a guy who was doing the work on it. There is, ah, I don't see any a particular bias on the block, but it's kind of a... whether the cost is too much for most African-Americans, or not. But um, we're always (coughing) accused (coughing) excuse me. Accused of gentrification, but um, I just bought to be walking distance to work. At that time interesting enough, the fifth estate was housed in the basement of the Sheridan Court apartment on Second and Canfield.

[23:00]

Paul: Now the Fifth, you said the Fifth Estate?

Gordon: Yeah, that newspaper, or radical newspaper. I gather it's still in existence.

Paul: I believe it.

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: There was a lot of radical newsletters and self published magazines that took place, or were somehow centralized (centered) in the Cass Corridor, I don't have a list of names of what those are, but they're usually a publication of some sort of advocacy group.

Gordon: Hmm....

Paul: Whether it be a neighborhood association, or you know simply, an org, a group of people with a you know express purpose that was somehow tied to the Cass Corridor whether it be politics or art it seems like the Cass Corridor has always attracted that sort of thing.

Gordon: mhmm... Well when I moved there were artists in the general neighborhood, but it wasn't really as densely populated with artists as it is now. There weren't the art

galleries and all the shops that have been popping up all over the place. There is so much activity in terms of commercialization and the new parking meter things (chuckles) that ah, parking is getting more difficult for people who live here. When I bought my house, the backyard, ah... as well as the one next door, which was co-owned by the original owners, was a gravel covered parking lot. And ah, initially the guy next door and I tried to rent out parking spaces, but that didn't work. It was too hard to collect rent and found if one renter from 640 West Willis paid, they expected all his friends to park there, too. And so on... Eventually we fenced it off. I park back there now and I got rid of all the gravel in my backyard. The guy next door just brought in dirt and put it on top of the gravel. The current owners have a lawn back there and its (planted) around the edges. I grow vegetables.

Paul: You're a gardener?

[26:00]

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: Do you have involvement with North Cass Community Garden?

Gordon: No, I don't. I'm not really involved at this point with any of the organizations. Back in the 70's particularly Mrs. Groehn and Henry Brown from the Historical Museum started the whole historic preservation activity in Detroit. The ordinances passed and eventually West Canfield was declared an historic district and so on. And it got it was all actually her activity in terms of getting grant money and so on to redo the streets plant trees (mutters) cobble street and so on and a horse fountain out front. (chuckles) That was, we actually had horses come to drink at the house. Originally, the horse fountain was a replica one that the historical museum owned. I forget where the original had been, but it was cast here at Wayne here, in the art department and installed in front of where Mrs. Groehn lived at the time at 627. And the mounted police would stop by and water the horses. Sometimes somebody would run out with a carrot, or something, but that, kind of missed that, it's uh, I don't know Wayne if Detroit has much in the way of horse patrols now, or not.

Paul: I saw them last night, Downtown.

Gordon: Oh Downtown, yeah. Well they traditionally get used for crowd control. And actually, quite a few years ago the city turned the water off so that it was changed the fountain was changed to a planter and its got plants in it now. But there was a period when users would bring their needles there to wash (chuckles).

Paul: Yikes. That's interesting that you mention a police presence in the area because it's my belief that the police presence in the Cass Corridor has kind of led to this sort of evolution where people are for reasons other than walkability to work, they want to live in the area.

Gordon: mmm...

Paul: Do you think that's a contributing factor? Do you feel safer in the neighborhood than in the past, or is this just an illusion?

Gordon: Uh... I suppose I have something of a feeling of it getting better in terms of safety. The as I got older I worried more about it. I used to go to the Hilberry Theatre, and then walk home at night afterwards and I always walked fastest, but never had any problems. My house has been broken into four times since I lived there. The last time I actually was home and in bed, and I heard noises and put my robe and slippers on and went downstairs and looking outside I saw a jacket on the table outside that didn't belong there, so I went outside and looked around and there was a guy trying to break into my bedroom window. And he had just gotten it open and was going to go in when I yelled at him and he jumped down and actually talked to him for awhile. He claimed he was testing my place for security outfit. But eventually he grabbed the jacket and ran and jumped over the back fence. At that time, I called the called 911 and nobody ever came out. The other times people came out. They, you know, looked around make sure nobody was still in the place and made some notes about what was stolen but um nothing ever came of it. They never took fingerprints or anything like that.

[30:00]

Paul: It must be very frightening experience. About what when was then last time you house was robbed?

Gordon: Oh I supposed maybe ten or twenty, I don't know, ah.

Paul: More than a handful of years ago.

Gordon: It's you see... I've been in there now for 46 years (chuckles). And if you divide it up by four it about every ten years. in the first time I was broken into I think it was one of the neighborhood boys. Used to hang around a bit. Apparently, the people who lived in my house before it was condemned were mainly students and a lot of them on drugs and stuff. I guess they used to throw out change and the neighborhood kids would come around and pick it up. But eh, there was a French door at the back and broke glass reached in and undid the knob. I later found a paper bag with glue at the bottom I saw outside. In the room where the French door was, I had a pier mirror leaning against the wall and it looked like someone had masturbated on it (chuckles). But then I found that my reel-to-reel tape recorder was gone, and my flashlight, which had been my father's, was gone, and you know, I reported those to the police. I later found that some lamb chops from the refrigerator were gone. And later still my toothbrush and toothpaste were gone. I'm pretty sure that was a boy not a professional thief as it were. The other times they broke into the window in the kitchen and stole the replacement reel-to-reel recorder that I had and as well as some memorial discs that I had purchased. The third time they broke into the basement and stole my lawnmower. I had an electric lawnmower. I had seen a guy watching me mow the lawn the day before and uh, the next morning I found that they had broken in and stolen the lawnmower.

Paul: It's sad the amount of crime in the area is still very high. So, you mentioned gentrification earlier. You've been around the neighborhood for some fifty some odd years. Most of that as a homeowner. Has this something that you've been anticipating, this turn-around in the Cass Corridor, um... it's amazing to me that through all the successive crime and basic changes in the neighborhood. You've decided to stay. You've stuck it out.

Gordon: Hmm...

Paul: I'm curious as to why? It would be easy to move.

Gordon: Well, it never really appealed to me to move elsewhere. I know people like the Pilling's they eventually moved out to Birmingham, but it was mainly for their children's sake and education. They were becoming somewhat indoctrinated into its black culture. Once their daughter came home and wanted her hair put up in corn rows, so they move to Birmingham. In terms of the neighborhood, I think there has a certain Wayne faculty presence. Aside from Dr. Wall, who was there when I got there, and I moved in later ah the McClain's from Chemistry and Kim now from the library. Ah, Catherine across the street teaches in mathematics. And we've had people from English or a there was a woman from Philosophy at one time (incomprehensible) again walking distance from work there are Dr. Don Marsh used to live in condo up on second, across the street from him in a building was Dr. Cable who taught in the English Department. And uh, again there is still a lot of faculty that live in the area. In general, it appeals to more people without children than those with. I know, like my current lawyer used to live where Kim lives and, uh, she and her husband sent their children to a Catholic school somewhere, even though I think she's an atheist and at least one of the boys was Atheist, as am I, but uh, the local schools have always had a bad reputation for whatever reason. Always in a sense of the time I've been here. With the exception, of course, of Cass Tech, which we've always had quite a few students that graduated from Cass Tech.

[36:40]

Paul: The Detroit Public School system has a pretty bad rap, and I think a lot of that has to do with um, poverty. Just not having the funds available for students. Large classrooms sizes, things of that nature.

Gordon: mhmm (agreement).

Paul: Obviously that's a whole other topic. But I've heard this from other residents in the Cass Corridor area that they don't want their children going to Detroit schools. That's pretty common.

Gordon: Well, no. One of my close friends, who is a former student went to schools on the east side of Detroit. He apparently still has ties with other students that graduated at the same time, so it wasn't always bad. It certainly was downgraded by the time I got here in the 60's. Again, whether it was cultural problems, monetary problems, crime

problems, it does appear that there was a certain amount of illegal activity by the administrators of the department of the public schools. It's sad, it seems like Detroit has always had (chuckles) that kind of a problem.

Paul: The problem of corruption and mismanagement?

Gordon: Yeah. Yeah, I think when I got here the prior Mayor had had that kind of difficulty. I think (he had) actually gone to jail (about it). I don't even remember that guy's name, but... I just. Now you even have talk of Duggan some problems this way.

Paul: Yeah. We'll see. Do you, ah, now that um, there are a number of businesses sprouting up in the Cass Corridor, do you find yourself using those new businesses. Do you actually shop in the Cass Corridor?

Gordon: Well in terms of grocery stores, when I first moved onto Prentis and it's still there on the corner of Prentis and Second. At the time it was a Kroger's, but after the riots they closed and it became a Chaldean (owned) store. It's now under second ownership as a Chaldean store. And it's, I use it mainly for or buying liquor rather than groceries at this point. Then, ah, Farmer Jack's opened up on Warren on the eastside (of Woodward) and so that's where we use to go shopping, but we drove there.

Paul: mhmm (understanding).

Gordon: When they closed, (incomprehensible) I was driving Mrs. Groehn down to a store in the Lafayette Plaisance area. And then ah, the University Foods opened up on West Warren. And the old Farmer Jack's became Food Pride. We've we've got a lot of large grocery stores at this point. The Tomboy grocery store which I tried out when I first came, I didn't like. And, of course, now it's a leather goods shop (chuckles).

Paul: Yes, it is.

Gordon: And also it for whatever reason Tomboy's attracted drug traffic. There was a lot arrests made out outside of that building.

Paul: That. Maybe that payphone on the corner of Second of Alexandrine had something to do with it. That's long gone.

Gordon: Well, all the payphones seem to be gone, now (laughing). That's why I bought a jitterbug phone just so that I'd have that particularly driving around or whatever. On terms of the area there's always when I arrived there was the Traffic Jam, Mario's, ah, there was kind of a soda shop there at Second and Prentis, which is now a laundromat and hookah bar, a Mediterranean or something restaurant, I haven't been in it. But the restaurants are part of the reason this the stability of the region of the area, and so on. The new stuff, like the Shinola, I've never gone in there. I've walked by. The other things, like for a while there was a barbershop where they were charging forty bucks a cut. (chuckles) I didn't go in there. So I go to the old General Motors building for hair

cuts. A dentist in the Fisher building and all my doctors are in the medical center complex (Detroit Medical Center). I can the medical center is a part of the stability of the neighborhood. I think the fact that it was kind of stable I think is what encouraged more activity in the area. But (eventually), I don't have any need for the stuff they sell at Shinola, or across the street at the gift shops and the art places and whatever. I have gone in occasionally to Avalon Bakery, but that that's about it in terms of businesses. I do go to Slow's To-Go and the Traffic Jam and... I'm not that fond of Mario's. It's really too much food and I don't like the atmosphere particularly. And the same with Whitney, I've been there a number of times but I don't want to dress-up for you know... But again... I'm a bachelor, and it's not fun to go out places with, by yourself and so on. And I'm much too old to date.

[43:43]

Paul: Understood. The umm.... Shops. Places like Shinola are not without controversy. The high-end retail that seems to have sprouted up on on what's referred to as the corridor. the umm... (coughing) excuse me... The ah, beer corridor (Metrotimes). Its just seems kind of incongruent with the demographics of the neighborhood. It seems to fly in contrast in a lot of ways... I certainly can't afford to shop at Shinola.

Gordon: Well... In terms of the breweries. I understand it, the initial one was developed by the owners of the Traffic Jam, Ben Edwards and Dick Vincent. That would be across the street by the parking lot. And eventually that split off and Traffic Jam has their own brewery in their own building and they're still working across the street. That Hopcat place, I don't think they brew there. Just...

Paul: They do not brew there.

Gordon: They just.... I haven't been in there. I do drink beer, but ah, I'm happy with a can of Bud Light. I don't worry about exotic beers.

Paul: Nothing too fancy.

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: I believe your name was mentioned in, ah, Brewed in Detroit book (Blum). When I was doing research for this interview, I came across a citation that some of the information from some of your former students found its way into that book. Talking about the beer history in Detroit.

Gordon: Oh really?

Paul: Which I found interesting. It's an interesting read. But Detroit has a long history of beer. And brewing. Stroh's and other names. So it's not surprising to me that there is such a revival surrounding this beer tourism thing that's happening on Canfield. You mentioned the Hopcat, there are others as well. And, all of them seem to be doing very well.

Gordon: Alright...

Paul: Yeah.

Gordon: I think that we do draw people from the suburbs. That they have a feeling of safety in the area. We get a lot of people walking the block. They apparently, they are going to the Traffic Jam, or one of the other places (incomprehensible) and afterwards they take a walk down the block and back the other side. So they look like suburbanites not local people.

Paul: And so again, so we come back that sort of issue of safety and crime and police presence and being able to go about your business without being umm... harmed. That's till a very big concern. I was looking at census figures, and it seems that the Cass Corridor has highs and lows in terms of attracting a population. It seems to be on an upward trend right now. Umm, but of course with the last census in 2010 the numbers were really low. So, even in the course of the past four or five years there seems to be a pretty radical change in the neighborhood, and I'm just wondering to what extent non-profits such as Midtown, Inc. and other advocacy groups, you know, I wonder what they have to... What their contribution is? Or, do you think it's more of grassroots thing that's changing?

Gordon: Yeah. I. I don't know... Ah, I use to attend the Midtown Alliance meetings at the Mario's restaurant. Have you ever gone to one those on Wednesday evenings?

Paul: I have not.

Gordon: Well, Kim whether she's still is the chair of that meeting, or not. You might ask her about it.

Paul: Sure.

Gordon: That was mainly oriented towards business people, but a lot of residents were there. And ah, they would, you know, discuss neighborhood problems. They usually had somebody from the police department there and some of the politicians, the neighborhood would show up. And so, it did just having that helped coalesced the neighborhood somewhat. Ah, I don't know the history for the North Cass people. There's some antagonism between West Canfield people and the north the North Cass people.

Paul: Did it have anything to do with the Dally in the Alley, or some bohemian lifestyle?

Gordon: I think that the antagonism started before the Dally in the Alley, but ah, and it was more the North Cass people that didn't like us for whatever reason. But ah, I used to go the Dally in the Alley. I don't bother anymore since I'm not much into modern or I don't need to buy anything anymore. But some of the neighbors still go up there. We get

the noise of course (laughter) traffic and parking all over the place.

Paul: Well it attracts thousands.

Gordon: Yeah, it's the same with Noel Night and other festivities. I don't know of anyone from the block who actually participates in them, but ah, we put up with them. And that's... Well, certainly Traffic Jam people are involved with those organizations. We've become friends with the owners of the Traffic Jam. They have put a lot of money and effort into the neighborhood. They ah, that's Scott Lowell and Carolyn Howard. Carolyn used to be a waitress there at the place... But they bought the Bronx Bar and the Blackstone, which used to be a prostitute hangout. They ah, own the warehouse across the alley on Willis. He is heavily involved in the restoration of the Forest Arms. Horrendous work going on there.

Paul: It's been going on for years.

Gordon: And earlier this year they bought a house on West Canfield. The stone duplex which had been vacant for probably thirty years.

Paul: Oh right, down by Third.

Gordon: Yeah, it's next to the church tabernacle.

Paul: Right.

Gordon: Which when I bought was still... well, it was shut down, but it had been a movie theater, a burlesque at one time.

Paul: And there's a movie theater that is down on, uh, Third and Alexandrine, now.

Gordon: Well that's the... in the old Weber furniture store. And it came from the Burton International School, what used to be on Cass and...

Paul: Yep.

Gordon: Whatever side-street that is.

Paul: Peterboro.

Gordon: But ah, I know Scott told me that he'll be working on the duplex this winter. It's ah, they say, it's been occupied only by a family of raccoons. We have quite a bit of wildlife in the neighborhood. I've had opossum, and raccoons, and chipmunks, and pheasants, and far too many squirrels. But ah, unfortunately the duplex was owned by a woman, a lawyer, who wouldn't sell it anybody on Canfield. And actually, at one point sold it to the guy who was building the row houses there at Third and Canfield.

Paul: Uh Huh.

Gordon: Horrible building, but ah.

[52:39]

Paul: They seemed to made cheaply.

Gordon: Yeah and it's, it was poorly designed. They actually had planned it to include a city owned berm area. They had to chop off an apartment because, well they were finally were told they couldn't build on that city property. But it they are very narrow, steep little little apartments, with a garage underneath that it's hard to get to if you have anything bigger than a Volkswagen. Anyway, she sold it to the guy that was building that place, and he wanted to put a driveway from the front down into the basement out the back so they could park in the back since there is no alley access to the back of that building. And the historic district commission approve that, fortunately, building safety turned it down. And then this guy went into foreclosure so that the original owner got it back. And uh, to say it was... We're very pleased that Scott has now bought it. Do something with it. And uh, that tabernacle next door originally was a car dealership.

Paul: Oh.

Gordon: And across the street where that monstrosity would end was a Diary Queen at one time. It was still functioning when I bought in the 60's. Eventually, the neighbors with cooperation from others got Anderson's Garden closed down. We actually picketed out in front one night. That's really the only physical involvement I've had with that. Although I did go to the trials and to close it down. I know afterwards Mrs. Groehn got death treats on the phone.

Paul: oh boy.

Gordon: I and I got at least one call with a woman saying, "dead, dead dead." (laughter) But they did close it down legally. The owner turned it over to Glorious Freedom Mission who owns it now. Glorious Freedom originally started in a building on Third to house, some storefront building. They took over the Calumet bar on the corner of Calumet and Third.

Paul: mmmm.

Gordon: So that decreased the bar... attraction to the area as it were. And it eventually Willis Show Bar closed. And the owners are doing something with that building, now. I don't know... I don't know what, but they used to live on Canfield.

Paul: Okay.

Gordon: They moved out to the suburbs and then but somehow they built up that building after it closed as a bar.

Paul: Are you talking on Willis and Third?

Gordon: mhmm...

Paul: Yeah, I believe it's going to be a bar again.

Gordon: A bar again?

Paul: That's what I heard. I don't know if that's true, or not.

Gordon: Oh, I don't know. It was a go-go bar. I went in there once with some of the others. there was a woman dancing half nude on the bar. It's a yeah one of the big lacks in the neighborhood is a good barbershop. Not not one that's charging 75 bucks for a shave, or anything. That happened, they did leave. They've been replaced by something else. But, I used to be able to get my hair cut at a barbershop on Third, below Forest. When he closed there was a barbershop down on Third near Seldon. The last time I went there a prostitute came in asking for shelter. Somebody was chasing her.

Paul: Oh boy.

Gordon: The barber sent her upstairs, so I... that wasn't a good place to go. Then there was a barbershop in the Maccabees building. If you remember Joe Durante who used to be the barber there?

Paul: Before my time.

Gordon: You know, you could drop in and if there was somebody there I'd wait and so on, but ah, it was Adamany when he was working for the Board of Education who actually kicked Durante out as a barber. The lease original lease has been signed by Durante's father, so he didn't have a lease to it. But he moved in with a barber down on lower Cass for awhile until that place was closed. In the interim, Durante took courses so he could be a dealer in a casino. But that's when I started going to the one in what is now the State office building. He's in his 70's commutes in from out near Saline somewhere. He's had a heart attack, so he's obviously not going to be there a lot longer and I don't where I'll go after that. is there still a barbershop on campus?

Paul: Um... There is one. I believe it's 25 dollars for a hair cut. It's high in my opinion, but not bad.

Gordon: The guy I go to charges 18. I usually give him 20. I have pay a couple bucks for parking. So it's, ah, so I suppose it would even out. But, to say it's ah, the neighborhood lacks that kind of facility. There isn't... Well I think there still is a women's hair place on Cass at Willis. For awhile there they talked of a barber in there but apparently that's gone. I even tried once there was a barbershop on Woodward in walking distance, but it

was catered to black men and uh, there was something going on in the back rooms and it wasn't healthy anymore. And again, uh, we don't have a department store really in the neighborhood. I used to go downtown to Hudson's or Crowley's. Now what shopping I do is largely by mail order catalog.

[1:00:05]

Paul: I think a lot of people are doing that. Yeah.

Gordon: But if Eastland Mall were closer, I could go over there. But I only go if I have to, like to go to Lowe's, or someplace.

Paul: It's difficult to get out to the eastside from here. Not easy. if you have a car, I mean obviously, it's better. Um, if you don't have a car, good luck.

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: The cross-town bus will only get you so far.

Gordon: Yeah. well. It was easy enough to take the bus down to Hudson's.

Paul: Sure.

Gordon: And if necessary you could walk home, but eh...

Paul: Yep. And I believe next year, or a year and a half from now, we'll have a little train going up and down Woodward. umm...

Gordon: Streetcar.

Paul: Streetcar. Maybe that will open up the New Center to, ah, to the Downtown for the Cass area. Who knows?

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: Sheer speculation.

Gordon: Crowley moved up to, ah, what, Woodward and Milwaukee, I think it was... At one time. And it also I guess at one time into what was the New Center building across from the, ah (thinking) let's see, what is now the State Office building. I refer to the parking lot I use as the Crowley lot, but it's on Lothrop, really.

Paul: Okay. I believe... Well, I don't know the name of that building.

Gordon: The Board of Education is in part of it.

Paul: Mhmm... (agreement).

Gordon: They're also in part of the Fisher Building, but ah, there are stores in the first floor and, uh, I'm trying to... (thinking) There is an overpass from the State building to that building and from that building to the Fisher Building. And an under-tunnel from the Fisher Building to the State office building. So you don't really have to cross the street, but I used to do anyway.

Paul: Yeah. No need to go outside from those buildings.

Gordon: There haven't been any real murders in the neighborhood for some time. One woman who used to live at you know rent a building a room on West Canfield was murdered down by Tomboy's

Paul: Oh boy.

Gordon: Years and years ago.... And there was a, the building called the Beethoven, on Prentis and Second, eh Third...

Paul: Yep.

Gordon: Yeah Third. Ah, one time many years ago there was a guy went and knocked on a door there presumably people he knew, and whoever was inside shot him (chuckles). But he managed to run away and he ran down onto West Canfield and the people who were from the apartment followed him and shot him in the head. The woman told the guy with the gun to blow his brains out, and essentially that's what they did. I can remember one of the neighbors went out to ah to wash the debris off the street.

Paul: Heinous.

Gordon: That's kind of the worst things that have happened in the neighborhood.

Paul: Do you think that, ah... That you know the worst for the area of the Cass Corridor is in the past? Ah, are you hopeful for the future? Or, basically... What do you envision for the future of the Cass Corridor?

Gordon: Well, I have a feeling it... More people are going eventually move out to a less active neighborhood. Ah, again partly because of the parking and the noise, and activities particularly older people aren't into kind of thing. But ah, I don't envision it going down to what it was before. But, we still have organizations in the neighborhood that try to take care of homeless and people who need food and so on. Some of the churches are involved with that, but also a place called COTS (Coalition on Temporary Shelter).

Paul: I'm not familiar...

Gordon: Temporary shelter, I think it is.

Paul: Okay.

Gordon: Ah, there is a major facility down below Seldon. I think there was somebody shot down there not that long ago. But, so there is a draw for people like that in that part of the southern part of the neighborhood. I don't know what the arena development is going to have. I assume that we'll all be pushed out eventually. But ah, there will be more people with money who want to live close to the facilities they enjoy, and ah...

Paul: Yeah. So you're saying that um, the future of the corridor will probably be younger and potentially more affluent.

Gordon: Ah, yeah I guess. That's I think one strong possibility.

Paul: Yeah, is there... is there any work that's left undone? Um, is there. Is... Are there projects, either ongoing right now, or maybe should happen in the future That would help benefit the Cass Corridor?

Gordon: Well, I did mention the, ah, Forest Arms development redevelopment that's a fairly large building and soon will cater... Not to students so much as to people who are working downtown, or otherwise have money.

Paul: Yeah. Professional.

Gordon: Some of the... Talking to Scott and it sounded like some of the units are going to be pretty plush. (mutters under breath) There are still buildings that need development. Behind me across the alley, it's 640 West Willis apartment house that's... When I first moved there they place was occupied by retirees and students. Then it kind of went downhill. The ownership changed. At one point it became a place for abused woman and children. And uh, while that was still going on, they made it into a half-way house for criminals. And again, it's changed... uh, made alterations, major ones over the years and it currently it's they have been working for over a year, I think now to redo parts of it. Most of it's vacant, I believe. But ah, I assume they're trying to make it more attractive to upper-class clientele. I remember talking to the manager a couple of years ago and he said they were totally rented, but they had problems collecting the rent. Ah, I've not been into any of the units. I don't know how large they are, or not. But ah, it seems like they had quite a bit of turnover. Sheridan Court apartments it's fairly large on Pren(tis)... on Canfield and Second. They been doing some work there, but, although it was presumably, all refreshed a couple of years ago, it still was allowed to rundown again. It needs a lot of work on the outside at least, but again it's mainly students in there.

Paul: It's certainly a high turnover rate, I think.

Gordon: Yeah.

Paul: Well, we've been talking for the better part of an hour. It's now a quarter after two. Um so, unless there are other things that we should talk about, I want to thank you for speaking with me today. Taking time out of your day.

Gordon: Well, you're welcome. Sort of made my day, as it were.

Paul: Well, it's been a pleasure. Thank you, sir.

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