



Video Story Transcript

Fond Memories & The Jane Addams Project

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49FKiipc8lg>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

"Fond Memories and the Jane Addams Project" is the name of my story. A long, long time ago, the Fain family moved from the South Side of Chicago to the west side. My mom and dad separated. And, so we moved to a kitchenette apartment. Before those fancy words, studio apartments, were ever thought of, there were kitchenettes. We moved to a basement apartment and later, around 1952, we moved to a two-room kitchenette at 2150 West Madison Street. My siblings and I shared a bedroom. The girls, my sister and I, slept on the lower bunk bed and my three brothers slept on the top bunk bed. Mom's room was kitchen, living room and bedroom. Mom slept on the couch. Outside of our apartment was the community bathroom where all the other tenants use, as well as we did.

One day, we received a letter from the Chicago Housing Authority. We were so excited. Back before those famous words by George Jefferson on TV, "Moving on up to the east side," we were moving to the projects. We moved to 1249 West Hill. You see, they had taken two one-bedroom apartments and made them together for a large family. So, the girls had a bedroom and the boys had a bedroom. And the girls had a bathroom and the boys had a bathroom. We had two kitchens. We even had a terrace, believe it or not! We had a hall that adjoined those apartments. Now my mom, she took that... what should have been her bedroom and she made it a formal dining room. And she slept in what would have been that second kitchen. We loved living there. The Chicago Housing Authority and the Jane Addams Projects. Now that neighborhood was a mixture of different ethnics. Back then, projects had all types of people from all backgrounds living there. There was an older Italian couple who lived next door to us. We grew to like them and they grew to like us. Now there was a little tension among the ethnic groups. Now there was the Taylor Street Dukes and

the Taylor Street Nobles. A gang, Italian gangs. There was also the Blue Flames, as colored basketball team. Now technically, they weren't a gang but when there was any trouble, they came and they supported and rallied around us, the colored people.

Well, my brother Anderson remembers an incident. When it was hot one day (like any Chicago day) and the fire hydrants were open and everyone was playing under the hydrants, he got into an argument with one of the Nobles and a fight started. And, uh, several of the other Nobles jumped in and tried to drown him under the hydrant. But there was an older Italian gentleman passing by and he called out, "Leave him alone, leave him alone! He's one of the good guys."

Wow! Could you believe that! My brother developed friendship with one of the guys in the neighborhood. Dominick, you see, we... they'd had art classes together in school and they found that they had something in common. Mr. Florio was an Italian teacher at Reed School and Mr. Lonzocram was my first African-American teacher. Mr. Florio lived down the street in the greystones and, you know what, we all moved together and lived together there.

There was Dick. Richard was his name but we called him Dick. He owned the corner grocery store back in the day when your word was your bond and an index card got you credit. Yes, you signed on the dotted line and Dick extended merchandise to you. You see, there were many poor families in the Jane Addams Projects along with us. And he did many of us great favors by extending credit to us and, you know, living in that neighborhood. But so many memories, you see, the projects were different then. People were, uh... it was a privilege to live in public housing back then. We mopped the landings and, and we swept the floors. And we became one big happy family. We looked out for each other. It was a time and a different era. It was the 50s and the 60s and people just did different things for one another. It was in that neighborhood, the Italian neighborhood, that I learned and developed a fondness for Italian foods. And Italian lemonade is one of my favorites today, as well as other dishes. Down memory lane and Jane Addams Projects and Reed School, I developed many friendships. From the projects, as well as the school, Taylor Street and Jane Addams Projects and Reed School were some of the happiest and the fondest memories of my life.