Michael Lally 12-15-17 b. 1942
Introduction
The interview, which takes place at HANDS, is introduced by Chris Matthews, who explains that the Reverse Archaeology project is focusing on the construction of Route 280 and its impact, which has "effectively changed the city for the worse," in part by cutting the city into "two sections, north and south of the highway; they've become increasingly disconnected through time, and as it came through, it devastated in particular the African American neighborhood along Oakwood Avenue, and an Italian neighborhood which is just down the road here on Essex, sort of between Essex and South Center. Ahm, and we've been interviewing people who grew up in the city, ah, to learn how—what it was like before the highway, ah, and, because we already knew that these were kind of successful communities in certain ways, what was successful about them that was lost."

Chris is interviewing Michael because he learned that he grew up in the Irish American community, which the project has not yet been able to look into. Therefore they are interested in learning from him what it was like here and also in other communities, as for example, South Orange, to which he moved as a child.

As it turns out, Michael is highly conscious of ethnicity, which apparently put a heavy stamp on the social organization of the places he frequented as a youth, and, because there was a lot of friction, especially between Italians and the Irish, it must have been crucially important, as he was growing up, to recognize ethnicity and form a mental map of ethnic boundaries.

Michael describes his youthful self as an intelligent person who nevertheless got into a lot of trouble. This description leads to a suspicion that he may always have been one to question rigid or irrational social norms. Whether or not that is the case, he now embraces today's more multi-cultural atmosphere, while at the same time he remains consciously aware of the various perspectives that different groups and individuals will take, and the different words they will use to discuss difficult or contentious topics. This awareness of the possibility of conflicting interpretations occasionally causes him to hesitate over words, or take the conversation in a different direction from the one his mind first suggests.

Like others, Michael relaxes as he gets into the interview and begins to speak more colloquially. He does not wait for questions, but follows his train of thought in a very natural way, although he himself apologizes for "rambling." It is hard to create useful subheads for such a naturally flowing record across more than seventy years of a man's memories, and the usefulness of the material presented here would be improved by the addition of tags, if anyone has time to do that. [Student activity???]

As with other interviews, odd commas, especially between subject and verb, are an attempt to preserve the hesitations typical of oral communication, especially when

reminiscing.

Interview
Michael was born in Orange, in Memorial Hospital, to a family that had lived in Orange for at time, but he grew up in South Orange, although he had his appendix removed at the same hospital in 1946 or 1947.

"So it was a thriving hospital. But I'd like to back up on you guys. I left in 1960, when I was eighteen, so, uh, I came back periodically….My first memory of the destructiveness of highways — because 280 wasn't built when I left. So one of the weird things about coming back in 1999 was all the state highways….We have…you know, we used to get everywhere by streets. In fact, when I was a boy, Valley Street, which ran from— I guess it, I guess it went to Springfield Avenue,…"

"The point I was trying to make was, the first destructive highway was the Parkway. I remember when they were building it."

"We used to go down the Jersey shore, I had a grandmother, through my mother, maternal grandmother, my mother grew up in Newark. My father's parents were immigrants from…Ireland; um, my mother's grandparents were immigrants from Ireland. So— My father, by the way, was born in 1899. So my memory goes back because I was the youngest of seven, one died when he was a kid; the oldest was, um, sixteen when I was born. So they're talking about stuff— You know what I mean?"

Michael goes on to assert that "the Parkway is totally destructive, everything. That was the first thing." He mentions how it plowed through the cemetery where his parents are buried, and says that he's never visited the graves because he "couldn't figure out where they were." He says they are buried in East Orange, but believes that the East Orange section is part of the same cemetery.

Michael says Vailsburg, the first neighborhood you come to when you cross South Orange Avenue into Newark, was an Irish neighborhood in those days, with an Italian neighborhood below that, "and then below that was the black neighborhood." At that time, back in the forties and fifties, "the high schools were designated by ethnicity," with the Italians and Irish being the dominant ethnic groups, although "the Germans came first, and…the German Catholics and the Irish Catholics intermarried."

He goes on to explain that he came from a very large family on both sides. and that his mother and mother's mother, who lived on Third Avenue in Newark, already had some admixture with German Catholics when they came over; they considered themselves Bavarians. His father's many brothers settled in several places: Orange, East Orange, and South Orange.

He thinks his older brothers and sisters lived on or near Scotland Road in Orange before he was born. HIs father (James, b. 1899), despite having dropped out of school after the seventh grade to help support his parents, had managed to buy part of little

hardware store in South Orange, but lost it in the Depression, ending up over a garage in Orange with his three oldest sons. Unfortunately their oil heater caused a fire, and for a while the Lally family had to sleep wherever they could find a place in people's houses in Newark, East Orange, and Orange, "and so on."

After a time, the family ended up on Hixon Place, right off Valley Street, in South Orange.

[sbh: Hixon runs just a little more that a block, from Academy Street to Valley. As Michael points out later on, Hixon then crosses Valley and comes to a dead end at the the RR tracks, where, he says, there was a roundhouse. Online discussions and photos make clear that in 1907 the roundhouse, which may actually have been located a block or so north of HIxon, suffered a fire that destroyed several engines:
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A02EEDF123EE033A25753C2A9649C946697D6CF>
<http://www.railroad.net/forums/viewtopic.php?f=85&t=79990&start=15>
<https://maplewood.worldwebs.com/forums/discussion/id/71470-Original-New-Jersey-Transit-Train-Cars?page=3#comment-1870441>

The utility building shown next to a possible turntable in one of the discussions linked above is clearly not a roundhouse, and the turntable next to it seems too small to be the one shown with the actual roundhouse. It might have served to turn one engine at a time back in the days when engines were unidirectional.]

Because the tracks, now used only for commuter trains, carried freight trains in his boyhood, "You could hear them going through all night long. I grew up with that sound, which I loved."

According to Michael, Valley Street and Scotland Road were the "connective;" and later on he uses the adjective "rich" to describe Scotland Road, while "that corridor" on Valley Street, was full of immigrants. When he was a boy and even much later, in 1960, when he left, the little curve that now joins Valley to Scotland Road at South Orange Avenue did not exist, and in fact his father's store was where that street is now.

"In those days, you had to turn right and turn left to get onto Scotland Road." Before the curve was put in, Valley went straight where a little park is [probably Spiotta Park]. In the 1800s, he adds, that property was the location of the old wooden South Orange Hotel.

When Michael was a boy, several little businesses were housed in the former hotel building: a florist, a cleaner, and a fish shop; after he lost his hardware store, Michael's father opened a small home repair business there. It was called 'Little Job' because his former partner would not let him use the 'Lally' name (due to the existence of another Lally's Hardware store). The new shop, Michael explains, was about a third the size of the room at HANDS where the interview is taking place.

The store had a table with some carpeting stapled onto it to make it possible to cut

glass there. Because of the fish store and the cleaner, customers would ask, "What's that smell?" As it was always there for them, the Lallys were not conscious of the odor. The upstairs was filled with "industrial junk, probably from back in the 1800s."

According to Michael's father, the hotel had a wooden sidewalk, and if "rich people" came along, men like him had to step off into the mud and let them go by. When Michael himself was a boy, the Valley Road corridor was filled with immigrants, while "WASP rich" people lived on Scotland Road, eventually becoming "Irish rich."

"And then when you got to the Orange line, it turned into the working class again….Irish and Italian, and the same in South Orange: Irish and Italian. There was still some leftover Germans, and then, for instance, around the corner from me, was one black family and there was one Jewish family,…When you got to Orange, you started picking up more Polish."

[sbh: The one Jewish neighbor reminds me of a comment by an acquaintance who grew up Jewish in (immigrant) South Philadelphia: "When I was I kid, I thought the entire world was Catholic."]

Michael continues to describe what groups lived on what blocks or stretches of the road: An ethnic neighborhood ran along the RR from Academy Street to Ridgewood Road in South Orange, with the neighborhoods on the Ridgewood Road side of Valley all Italian, but Irish from the other side of Valley to Academy. "And then when you got down around Third Street, it was Black." He states that Orange was "pretty much the same," segregated and divided into ethnic neighborhoods, and suggests that Mindy would have a good memory for that.

[First Street is the first street in the direction of Newark after the intersection where Valley meets South Orange Avenue today, so this neighborhood was quite close by.]

[It is hard to identify the Cherry Street mentioned. The Cherry Street in West Orange is far from the area under discussion, and is now well north of 280. Cherry Lane is a small, non-residential section of Pleasant Valley Way where it runs through South Mountain Reservation. Cherry Place in Maplewood, south of Seton Hall, is about 1.5 miles from Valley, along Parker Street. Cherry Street in Newark is east of the Garden State, and runs off McCarter Highway right next to the Passaic.]

After apologizing for his poor recall of street names, Michael states that he "could walk you around and point it out." He did, however, have cousins who lived "you know, over near where Highland is, in apartment buildings, those red brick apartment buildings: They were some of the first— You know, we thought of that as sort of classy, interestingly. Now, you know, South Orange is a wealthier town, but in terms of neighborhoods, living in apartments seemed, like something in a movie, right? You know what I'm saying?"

[I cannot figure out where these apartments are or were. Highland Road in South

Orange is indeed quite upscale, with substantial one-family homes on generous lots.]

Apologizing again, now for "rambling," or following out the connections that his mind makes when he looks back, Michael points out that he "moved back to the area in 1999," settling in Maplewood. For a short time, he owned a house on Kensington [Terrace], which ran into Columbia High School [which sits on the other side of Parker, and takes up the block between Valley and Academy]. The school was housed in a much smaller building when he was a boy, and it was "totally integrated." To him, that suggests that "Mindy's memories will be a little different…and that's because South Orange, in the forties and fifties, was a little different, than Orange in the fifties, sixties, seventies…things were changing."

"But the high school was, totally integrated, and, because the Irish and Italians were the dominant groups, including in Newark, before, you know—(long pause). And because race—" Michael goes on to state that ethnicity was called 'race' back then, and that fact could be checked out in the Star Ledger because he remembers a headline about a 'race war' between Italians and Irish.

[The OED bears out this use of the word. Later Michael will discuss the words used to refer to the Newark 'uprisings' or 'riots,' depending on one's point of view, and this may be the complication that caused the long pause noted above.]

Michael's grandmother, who grew up in Newark, talked about fighting between Germans and Irish, and described German butchers coming out with their butcher knives to oppose the Irish "with their shillelaghs." Michael's grandfather, born in Ireland and also Michael, had a shillelagh and kept it next to his chair.

[sbh: Today, instead of keeping this characteristic Irish walking stick close by, he'd get a hip replacement.]

Returning to the topic of Columbia High School, Michael points out that Parker Avenue (sic, actually Street), in front of the high school, formed the borderline between Maplewood and South Orange. Behind the high school was a field that went to Hixon Place, his old street.

[According to the census map of Tracts 193 and 195, the official borderline actually begins at the corner of Hixon and Valley and angles SE across the field mentioned, so that the high school building, which serves a joint school district, lies in Maplewood. Michael's recollection seems to indicate a socially important boundary, as seen later on in a comment by his sister.]

Although he lived only a block [or less] from Maplewood, Michael used to tell people that he didn't go to Maplewood; he admits that he would go to Maplewood movies sometimes, but at that time he would insist that he only went there "to smack somebody around (laughter). Which I'm sure Maplewood people would object to, so don't know if I want that in there."

Michael fills this out by explaining that "Maplewood was such a WASP fortress in the forties, when I was a kid— When my older brother and sister were kids, you couldn't get into the Maplewood Country Club, not only if you were Black or Jewish, but if you were Catholic, to keep the Irish out."

As for the ethnic street where he lived, he illustrates the type of multi-family living arrangements that existed on Hixon by stating that he, his parents, his five siblings, and at one point his maternal grandmother, lived in a three bedroom house along with a boarder who rented one of the rooms. Despite that, "We were the Kennedys of the fucking neighborhood (laughter), we were the class. My old man, even though he was, a seventh grade dropout, owned the fucking store."

"Everybody else," including his grandfather and his brother, was a cop or worked like the other men on the street: a butcher, a street cleaner, and so on. Where there were 47 kids on the block when he was young, there are maybe seven now, he says, and with "no TV,…no air conditioning, everybody's out in the street. And we'd fight with the next street. You know it was just all that. And then of course we'd…bond together and fight the Italians…."

"The first Italians moved in while I was still living there. And that was a big deal. They invited us for a meal at their house; we went….And, um, we all ate our asses off. And it was all, like, antipasto: We didn't know, didn't know, nothing about it. And they start bringing out more food….[but] we're all full, you know (laughter). And they considered us drunks, and we considered them animals."

Thus things were changing at the time he moved away (because of being in love with a black girl), and by the time he came back there was total integration: His brother married an Italian, "and his kids…married Asians, and Hispanics, and Blacks, and so on, and I praise God that (knocking on wood), that occurred, you know what I mean? Because I was fighting my way through every fucking block, when I was a kid."

Returning to the topic of Orange, Michael says that, "The Irish neighborhood…was along the tracks, like everywhere else, in the forties and fifties," but the people who moved in subsequently were Polish more than German, and in fact one of his sisters "married a Polish guy."

Pointing to his shirt, which he says he is wearing in honor of Our Lady of the Valley, church and school, Michael goes on to state that the institution was "pretty white," and he played ball there, although he went to high school in Newark, on an academic scholarship to St. Benedict's, adding that he was "smart, but got in trouble a lot." He suggests checking out a documentary about St. Benedict's; he thinks it is called "The Rule."

["The Rule," 2014, with preview available at <http://www.pbs.org/program/the-rule/>: "Learn how a prep school achieves near 100 percent college acceptance for inner-city

boys.']

Michael says that the school was "predominantly Italian and Irish, when I was there," the idea being to provide college preparation, "with a profession in mind," for boys from ethnic working class families. The students were divided into scientific, legal, etc., tracks. The building was located "right in the ghetto," and the surrounding area was "burned to the ground" during the uprisings, leading the monks to move to a location "in the pretty parts of Jersey." Some of them returned and dedicated themselves to "*this* community now, because, after the uprising: white flight."

Michael goes on to describe the location of the school, near a statue of Lincoln where South Orange and Springfield join and then come to an end on Market Street. He says that the land rises as you come back up out of Newark on South Orange, and it was "all black" up to the top of that hill, around 14th Street, he thinks. The street was all row houses with asbestos "tiles" made to look like brick. He then states that the siding he is describing was everywhere when he was growing up, either that or wood shingles, with his own house having shingles.

[He is almost certainly describing a type of asphalt siding that was once ubiquitous on cheap construction.]

Daddy Grace had his church in the area of the school, and from a classroom window Michael watched the Grace nuns in their purple robes open a fire hydrant to baptize people. But after you passed up to the top of the hill, as described, South Orange became Italian, and he mentions West Side High School, although he is not sure of the current name, a high school that was where the Parkway is now.

[West Side, now called 'West Side Campus,' and housing Newark Early College High School and a vocational school, is housed in a building dating to 1925. It sits on a campus opposite 14th Street on South Orange Avenue, and therefore at the top of the rise mentioned earlier. The Parkway is some blocks farther west.]

Michael claims that his point was to explain that, as people moved from the ethnic neighborhoods on the fringes of Newark, and settled in Orange, they became more "mixed," with most of the fighting he recalls happening in South Orange. Italians were on Central Avenue and Scotland Road, and in the more southeasterly neighborhoods generally, with the Irish closer to the border with West Orange.

In the fifties, Michael belonged to a gang called the Archangels, which operated in the Valley near the Orange/West Orange border. Previously he ran with a very Irish South Orange gang called the Spartans; the Archangels, although all white, were a little more ethnically mixed.

When he was grown, and living on Kensington, which was so close to Hixon, he once asked his sister, Irene, if she'd ever been on Kensington before. Apparently she never had, despite having attended Columbia High School (into which it runs), because she

replied, "You mean? What are you talking about? Cross Parker?"

Like his sister, Michael and his friends avoided Maplewood. They hung out in Irvington, South Orange, Orange, and East Orange, considering Newark their downtown. The No. 31 Bus to Newark had a driver who would greet his mother by name.

Michael had cousins in East Orange, but by the time he left, in 1960, that town already had an increasingly black population, while Orange had more Italians. South Orange, which had been a WASP town, was becoming more Jewish, also absorbing Irish who had moved up to a professional level. He also mentions his Polish brother-in-law whose family lived on one of the streets near the ironworks, near where Mindy is now.

When Michael was in primary school, many immigrants were still arriving, especially Italians. "There was a giant Italian gang in Newark that dominated the Oranges as well, called the, the Romans." He hasn't looked them up, but has written a little about them. There was a similar Irish gang in Jersey City: "Harrison, Carney, and Jersey City were dominated by the Irish. Newark became dominated by the Italians…."

Michael's father was the Democratic ward heeler for South Orange, and in fact was the one who turned a Republican district to the Democrats. In 1965, when Michael was in the service (1962-1966), a man named Dinty Carey ran the Essex County Democratic machine. Carey, realizing that the Irish grip on power was weakening, called Lally senior and said, although Michael is not sure this should be recorded, "We're gettin' out and we're leavin' the Guineas holding the bag….We'll get something for one of your boys…," and offered a postmaster position in a new post office.

Michael's father got in touch with him, although he was somewhat estranged from the family at that point, by Michael was not eager to come back to New Jersey, so the position went to one of his brothers, who was a cop, and always regretted changing the course of his career, especially as many of the postal employees were old buddies of his, and he had looked forward to moving upward in the police department.

Michael goes on to draw a comparison between the Irish and Italian machines by mentioning Italian bosses who subsequently ended up getting indicted, and illustrates further by saying that eventually his father was appointed Secretary of the Shade Tree Commission of Essex County and provided a driver named Tony. Tony had mob connections, and offered to get his passenger anything he wanted: girls, booze, heroin, etc. Tony apparently was impressed by the clean habits of the Lallys, while his own son was a heroin addict.

Michael sums up the difference by explaining that the Irish machine concentrated more on people's needs: stoplights, road signs, and so on, and tells the story of a Mrs. Magliera, whose son received a compassionate leave from the military after his grandmother died, and as a result brought a large contingent to vote for the Democrats in the next election.

Michael concludes by saying that the people in the Italian machine "had their tentacles into everything," but their grip weakened after the uprising, which came right at the time when "these goddamn highways" were being put through. He comments that a conspiracy minded person could almost posit a conspiracy: "Whoa! You know, the blacks have an uprising, and we've gotta destroy all these neighborhoods!'

East Orange, Michael continues, was considered an upscale town, with Upsala College and a lot of large Victorian houses. Chris agrees, mentioning its selection, in 1954, as the nicest city in the US. Michael played ball there, in Central Playground, and his cousin Richard lived there. Michael and his friends used to walk everywhere, or jump on a train and jump off before the conductor came, and could easily reach that town. (He reminisces about the wicker seats, the leather straps, "and windows that opened.")

On their way home from a ball game in East Orange, Michael and his friends would stop at a bar and restaurant called Toast of the Town, located near the White Castle at the corner of Central Avenue and Scotland Road. The bar was at the right as you came in; mussels were always steaming behind i, ready to be dumped into paper bags along with sauce. A bag was not expensive, and the friends would continue down Scotland Road eating their mussels. The building is still there on Scotland Road, with the sign, and Michael says "the workers" hang out in in that area.

[The tall neon "Bar Grill, Pizzeria, Clam Bar" sign, at 283 Scotland Road in Orange, no longer describes the business, which seems to have become a liquor store.]

To Michael, that sign is one of the few things that haven't changed; the White Castle [481 Central, at corner of Scotland Road], looked quite different before, it was "smaller, cheesier" and all the teens hung out there in the fifties. He says it was "rough" because of all these "(?)deseptic(?) [40:25] robberies," and explains himself by saying that "obviously Blacks got shit, but my, sense of it was, that they were more or less lost in the mix, it was mainly the Italians and the Irish…."

Starting to explain the kind of "shit" that black youths had to endure, he asserts that there was always a "teenage thug guy who ran the teenage hangouts," and recalls a kid like that who used to hang out near Gruning's ice cream place, although he cannot recall the name.

Michael describes two different locations for Grunings, one in South Orange Village, one at the top of a hill and called 'The Top,' now represented by a condo building with the same name. You could see New York from the windows there, making it a nice place for "a fancy date." He spells out the name: 'Gruening.'

[There is a Facebook page for Gruning's Ice Cream with a photo of the sign. Clearly it had lost both an original umlaut and the 'oe' pronunciation by the time an old high school year book misspelled it as 'Grunnings.'
<https://maplewood.worldwebs.com/forums/discussion/id/92615-Grunings-South-Orange-Ave-On-The-Hill?page=2>

<https://maplewood.worldwebs.com/forums/discussion/id/92615-Grunings-South-Orange-Ave-On-The-Hill?page=2>
Also <http://www.griswold.com/grunings.htm>. ']

Still searching for the names of old hangout bosses, Michael comes up with Eddie "Eddie I" Iken, who was a boss in South Orange, and may still be alive. He lived with the Lally family for a time, and was sent away to a penal institution for several years during his teens.

Michael cannot come up with the name of the Orange tough who hung out at the White Castle mentioned above, but describes a time when this fellow kicked the crutches out from a black customer with a broken leg, and uses the incident as an example of the kind of "shit" that used to occur for Blacks. He adds that "in those days" the Valley in Orange up to around Lincoln had a "battleground" feel. "East Orange was a little calmer, and South Orange…under the surface certainly seemed a lot calmer."

Michael also asserts that people looking for fights would come up from Newark, sometimes in cars. He realizes that this emphasis on gang fighting seems melodramatic now, but recalls an old buddy who visited from California and reinforced the idea while they drove around together looking at their old haunts.

One place where fights used to take place was in an empty area below the RR station in South Orange, or in the parking lot behind Grunings. No one brought guns to these fights, although the Romans were rumored to carry butcher knives, but Michael himself observed only car antennae and belts used as weapons.

In response to a question about the reason behind all the fighting, Michael asserts that it was a fight between ethnic groups that were trying to get ahead in a new land. The Italians would call the Irish animals (and later he says the Irish would call the Italians animals, while the Irish were considered to be drunks). Michael's mother told him to keep his hands out of his pockets so he wouldn't look like an Italian, with an unstated message that Italian boys played with themselves, an impression probably created by the Italian culture that made them seem "more sensuous" than "the uptight Irish."

To support this evaluation, Michael quotes from a sonnet in a 1999 book of his own, *It's Not Nostalgia*, *Poetry and Prose:* "The Italians wore, gold crucifixes on chains around their/ brown Italian necks and carried porno/ playing cards from Newark, the city/ where statues die and parades got lost." [Quoted as recorded; the version of the poem provided by Googlebooks differs slightly. <https://books.google.com/books?id=gacBQc8nKZkC&pg=PA13&lpg=PA13>]

For another example of ethnic difference, Michael refers to the V-neck sweaters the Italians would wear with nothing underneath, while he, Irish, felt it "really daring to take my button up off with my T-shirt underneath." For undershirts the Italian boys favored the kind with no arms; "We were like, 'How the fuck does that help you with your sweaty armpits?' (laughter)"

Michael feels he differed from his Irish peers in being attracted to "all the girls," no matter what color or ethnic background, and says his friends could not understand that. He goes on to explain that in those days it was much easier to guess a stranger's ethnicity. All older Italian women, for example, "wore all black, end of story. And they wore, they wore, head things."

Irish girls wore kerchiefs a lot, and showed by the way they tied them how 'tough' they were, some of them belonging to girl gangs; Michael recalls one called the Krazy Kittens. The immigrant Italian girls, mostly from southern Italy, were darker, and had "long, flowing, wavy, black hair." In the struggle for "power," he thinks the Irish got ahead first because they already spoke English, thanks to 200 years of repression of the native Irish tongue [Gaelic] back in Ireland.

Similarly, Michael says, the Italians ended up in prison a lot because they had trouble 'getting' the political system, and he claims that "the political machine, the Democratic machine, in Essex County more or less fell apart under them," although he is aware that a lot of Italians would object to the way he is portraying this, but he thinks his observations are "pretty accurate" because "I was taking notes."

"Our Lady of the Valley— We went by parishes more often than towns: Sacred Heart on the Vailsburg-South Orange Line; St. George's in Maplewood, which we didn't pay any attention to; Our Lady of Sorrows in South Orange, which his Irish immigrant grandparents helped build…."

Our Lady of Sorrows, therefore, dates only to the late nineteenth century; It sits on Prospect Street at the highest point in South Orange, Michael says, and was the biggest church with the highest steeple — all built with Irish labor, although his grandfather was a footman before he came over, a fact that led Michael to watch Downton Abbey. His wife, Michael's grandmother, had been a scullery maid.

There is a story, called "the legend" by Michael, that his grandfather was the first police officer in Orange, whether or not this is true. The grandfather was also "a wise ass" and a drinker, and once, at the time of WW I, had to jump out of the bedroom of a housemaid in South Orange, and got a friend with a military uniform to claim it was him, and not the cop, that was seen jumping out. Michael has a picture of his grandfather with a bicycle, and pictures of him wearing both a high police hat and a low one more like those of today, with the old coat that buttoned way up and came down to his thighs.

The police of his grandfather's era operated in shady ways, once cutting down a tree across the railroad tracks to stop a rumored shipment of whisky and get a few cases for themselves. Another family story claims that his grandfather would call in his checkpoints from a bar, and once, when questioned about his supposed presence on a certain hill, he replied, "Well, sure I'm on the hill. Can't you hear the wind blowing?"

Because the grandfather was drinking so much, Michael's grandmother managed to get

him a medical retirement. After that he would sit on his porch at the bottom of Hixon Place, next to a gas station and across the street from a diner and a bowling alley, getting salutes from the police officers heading back at the end of their patrol to this edge of South Orange.

When Michael left, he says, the Irish were already beginning to move out, many of them moving down to towns on the shore where they had not previously felt welcome. Meanwhile, the Italians were becoming more and more dominant;, and after the riots or uprisings in Newark, more and more Blacks began to move in. That was the time when people began to limit the use of the word 'race' to skin colors rather than applying it to ethnicity based on national origin.

Asked if the movement out to suburbs destroyed the former cohesiveness of the ethnic groups, or had an effect on the gangs, Michael claims that "in the fifties, in New Jersey, they put a law in that you couldn't wear gang colors…."

[He is probably referring to a statute like **New Jersey § 2C:33-29. Crime of gang criminality;** which refers to the commission of a crime while being part of a gang, as shown by tattoos, colors, or various other means of identification, and conflating that with the regulation of gang colors and insignia by some high schools.]

This leads to a discussion of gang jackets: The Spartans had a red corduroy jacket with white silk inserts, and names of the owners on the back. Michael, the boy who got in trouble a lot, got kicked out of the Spartans A.C., a development that required removal of the letters spelling "MIKE" from the back of his jacket. The 'A.C.', standing for 'Athletic Club,' made the jackets acceptable to the powers that be for a time, as did the letters S.C., for 'Social Club,' but eventually "they outlawed them." Then the gangs tried wearing letter sweaters, without much success.

Michael also points to the emergence of the drug problem as another complicating factor. [sbh: I can attest that this was clearly the case in NYC in the late fifties.]

In contrast to the Spartans and other gangs, the West Orange Archangels had no colors, no jackets, and Michael was "didn't know anybody who even knew who they were" until he met up with a woman, Connie Nicholson, who had a house in South Orange but now lives in the South, and read a poem in which Michael mentioned the Archangels. She surprised him by coming up with the name of one of the members, Booth Robinson. "a really sweet guy."

Michael says the Archangels didn't fight, and the Spartans actually didn't fight very much; they were more likely to compete with another gang by playing a game of tackle football. "And most of those kids were rich Irish kids anyway; that's one of the reasons they ended up kicking me out: They weren't from my neighborhood. But they wanted— What happened was, this movie came out, Blackboard Jungle— You know that movie? …Blackboard Jungle came out in 1952, or [195]4…." [Actually 1955]

Michael goes on to explain the movie's setting, in a tough NY school, its use of a rock beat like an almost military drum roll, and the way it made gangs, as well as the expression "Daddy-O," seem attractive to teens in the Oranges. He goes on to mentions "a poor Italian immigrant" named something like 'Ray,' and still in the seventh or eighth grade at the age of fifteen or sixteen: "a little, dark, swarthy guy with black curly hair" who became the butt of much laughter after he came to school wearing a jacket with a fake gang name like "Fifteen Daredevils."

"By the end of the fifties, you know, a lot of the gang stuff was gone. Drugs—heroin had become more of a presence. He goes on to comment on the way the pervasiveness of drugs seems to come in "waves," and mentions a poem he was asked to write for a reading at the Paul Cooper Gallery that took place on the evening before we went into Iraq: *March 18th, 2003,* in which he pointed out that we already had "an epidemic of drugs" and did not need a war. (He also mentions a few of the other poets, e.g., Robert Cruelly, who read their poems there.

[See <http://www.amazon.com/March-18-2003-Michael-Drawings/dp/8881586029>, which describes the poem and states that the reading was called "Poets Against the War."]

He comments that the wave of 2003 involved the ethnic communities. He cannot give details of its development, and who was selling, however, as he moved away, although the plague began in the late fifties, before he left. Later he says that the 'myth' is that mainly Italians were involved in the drug trade, but he's sure Irish thugs like Whitey Bulger were in on it too.

[At one point he uses the word 'aimed' as if the scourge had a deliberate introduction, but he does not continue in that direction, instead mentioning a possible beginning in "pockets" of drugs among jazz musicians.] He thinks that epidemic was not as bad as the one now.

By the time he came back in the seventies, he saw ethnic barriers breaking down. He was a ring bearer when his brother married an Italian in ~1949, and that was "an incredible scandal. It was just—Everybody, you know, I— Behind closed doors the adults were just arguing all…day long: 'We can't let him do this, you know, This'll be the end. He's marrying an Italian girl.'"

The bride was from Washington, DC, and when the family went down for the wedding he saw that the town was "totally segregated, legally, and of course, her, her, her parents, were pretty brown-skinned, you know. They were very very sweet people. Her father was a mason, you know, a bricklayer, but he was a really refined, educated man. It was like a mind expander for me: Oh wow! And of course I fell in love with her little sisters immediately, um, but, ahm, that was considered, you know, like, taboo. By the late fifties, you know, that was starting to become, common, and by the seventies, you know, you would, you were hearing—People either *left*, and stayed to themselves, like the Bronx Irish…."

He goes on to explain that many of the Irish living in the Tremont Avenue area of the Bronx moved down to the DC corridor, leading to the number of Irish bars and other establishments you can find there today, adding that they were inspired to move "after the sixties, after the riots." He adds that many of those who stayed ended up marrying Puerto Rican girls, and by now, including in his own family, people are more comfortable with black-white unions.

[He's right about the legal segregation. And Brown just caused white flight or private schooling in DC, so Amy Carter attended an almost entirely black elementary school.]

Michael says he is happy about the mixing that takes place today, but comments that "some of the heritage is lost" when that happens. He then refers to the interplay between Black and Italian in the Spike Lee film, "Do the Right Thing" where Pavarotti and Willie Mays are brought up as examples of the superiority of their respective groups.

Michael complains that the Irish did not know much about their heritage because "the English destroyed it, the English kept us from it." He concludes that the Irish and the Blacks share the similarity that they were deprived of their culture by a group that oppressed them, while the Italians had a proud past they could point to; as a result, they were less likely to feel they had to result to violence to win an argument. He says it took him a long tome to figure out this connection between black people and the Irish.

At the same time, Michael says, Irish parents, coming from a background of oppression, were quick to "smack down" any sign of outspoken leadership or cockiness in their offspring. He thinks this is the reason for the expression *backhanded compliment:* "You're a good-lookin' boy. Who the hell do you think you are?"

Turning to the period when he wanted to marry a black girl, Michael describes his brother's attitude that it was okay to be the buddy of a black colleague on the police force, in his case "LJ," the first black cop in South Orange, but not to invite black people into the home and family. Michael laughed at that, he says, pointing out that his brother, who drove "a giant, used, green cadillac," kept a refrigerator on his porch, and drank at a bar called the Squirrel's Nest, lived in much the same way as the black people they knew.

To illustrate the way friction between the Irish and the Italians extended into the police force, Michael now mentions "Loat" and "Half a Loaf," Italian brothers who lived on the other side of Hixon. One of them, a cop, got into a bar fight. The policemen that were called in to break up the fight included Michael's Polish brother-in-law, and his brother's Irish American father-in-law. They apparently took the side of the Irish in the fight, leading to a permanent rift between the families. The rift was especially hard on the women who had previously enjoyed a friendly relationship with their neighbors.

Chris sums this up by commenting on the way friction beneath the surface is likely to

crop out in a fight situation, and Michael points out that fist fighting went out of style when guns became more common, adding that it was not unusual to see a bout of fisticuffs outside the White Castle or Toast of the Town establishments mentioned above.

Saying that he himself was not 'tough,' he points to a time when he visited Belmar with a tough young Irish friend named Skippy, who belonged to a gang called the Loafers:

"And we heard— It was late at night and there was half a pier, around sixteenth street or somewhere in Belmar—Belmar was that way too. Belmar was the place where working class Jersey went to the beach…."

He interrupts the story to describe the old-fashioned ferris wheel in Asbury Park that had bench seating, every bench named for a town in New Jersey. That was before the seats were enclosed and he figures that the enclosure became necessary, not for safety reasons, but to keep kids from throwing things at one another.

Belmar at that time, he continues, had a lot of little working class bungalows and a number of large Victorian hotels facing the beach; one of them, located near 18th Avenue, was named McCann's. Masses used to be held in the dining room there, due to lack of room in the local church. The beaches across the street from McCann's were Irish; two avenues down, they were Italian, across from Fifth, the beach was Jewish, and so on. "But interestingly—this is real interesting—black people that went to the beach in Belmar, went to the Irish beach."

By now Michael has lost track of the story about Skippy, although he insists that he is not as tired, after more than an hour, as his interlocutor expects, and Chris asks him about the Valley section of Orange. The first thing that springs to his mind is the fact that so many men, including the Irish, were employed in the factories there, and h asks about Western Electric, if that was in Orange, because he has a brother-in-law who worked for Western Electric and had a Bermuda bell in his car, a type of bell that was worked by a pedal.

Mention of the Valley also reminds Michael of the bars there: He recalls that there were places like the White Castle where kids hung out, but he's not very clear about this for Orange; but mentions a place in West Orange, an old fashioned candy store of the type that also sold magazines, newspapers, and sometimes had a soda fountain and a juke box. It was located near a hardware store [name unclear, sounds like "Valley hopper"] a little beyond an "old timey diner" that is still on Main Street.

[This might be the Americana Diner at 272 Main in West Orange, but it's hard to tell. There is a mini-mart next to it that looks a lot like the kind of place that used to contain one of the old corner candy stores Michael describes.]

When Michael used to hang out at that candy store, everyone else would order cherry cokes, but he thought they were too sweet and not cool, so he would get vanilla cokes.

[The transcriptionist must have been even cooler: She used to order 'spritzes,' or carbonated water with vanilla syrup.]

Michael explains that Grunings was the place to get that kind of thing in South Orange, and the White Castle in Orange. He thinks there must have been another spot somewhere in Orange, but he cannot come up with it. He add that there was another place of that kind near "Terry's Corner or Four Corners," near where Eagle Rock Avenue comes to an end.

[He may be thinking of Tory Corner.]

Michael doesn't recall any trouble between conflicting groups from the different Oranges at the soda fountains, but he does remember "guys coming up from Newark," mentioning a place in Irvington on South Orange Avenue where one of the boys from the "giant" mixed Irish family of a truck driver went and got a sawed off shotgun to scare off the Newark boys. "So there were guns around sometimes."

In response to a question about the motivation behind the gangs, and if they fought over turf, Michael says that if there was a business end to any of them, he was not aware of it. He is willing to entertain the idea that some of the older guys, like the Loafers, the Jersey City, Carney, Harrison Irish gang mentioned earlier, who ran in age from 13 to 25, were "mobbing" in some way: "I know they were involved in criminal activity, but I don't know, like, taking over drug turf or something."

Michael says he once looked into the name "Loafers" and discovered it was a term used in 19th century Manhattan, but doubts if the Jersey City Loafers knew anything about that. His source was a biography Walt Whitman, and apparently Whitman mentions other things that seem surprising: break dancing, and the blues. He recommends a book by Dan Cassidy, on the Irish contribution to the English language.

[He is probably referring to *How The Irish Invented Slang,* a book of a popular type not likely to be recommended by serious linguists.]

Asked about his father's and grandfather's given names, Michael says he was James A. "Jimmy" Lally, and used "Jas." as the abbreviation, with Jas. A. Lally on the shop. His grandfather was also named Michael, and came over as a teenager.

Asked which of his books might be most useful for the project's library, he mentions the poem *Lally's Alley* and the volume *It's Not Nostalgia,* already referred to above, in connection with comments on the sensuous nature of Italian culture. A person in the background comments that Mindy already has a lot of his books, but not all of them, and Michael says there are too many for that, commenting that, "as you can see" and "as one critic said," he is quite "prolix" or "voluble."

Michael looks over a copy of *It's Not Nostalgia* belonging to Michael and mentions or

marks the poems or stories he thinks most appropriate, saying, among other things, that "Who's sorry now?" is entirely about Orange. Commenting on how one writer may take off from another, he says that after Gary Snyder wrote "*Things to Do Around,Tokyo,* or something like that" other poets of the sixties ran with the idea , like Ted Kerrigan, who did *Things to Do Around Providence,* and Michale himself wrote *Things to Do Around Newark,* a poem of only one line, which takes off the stale candy his grandmother used to feed him.

[The Snyder poem is Things to Do Around Kyoto.]